











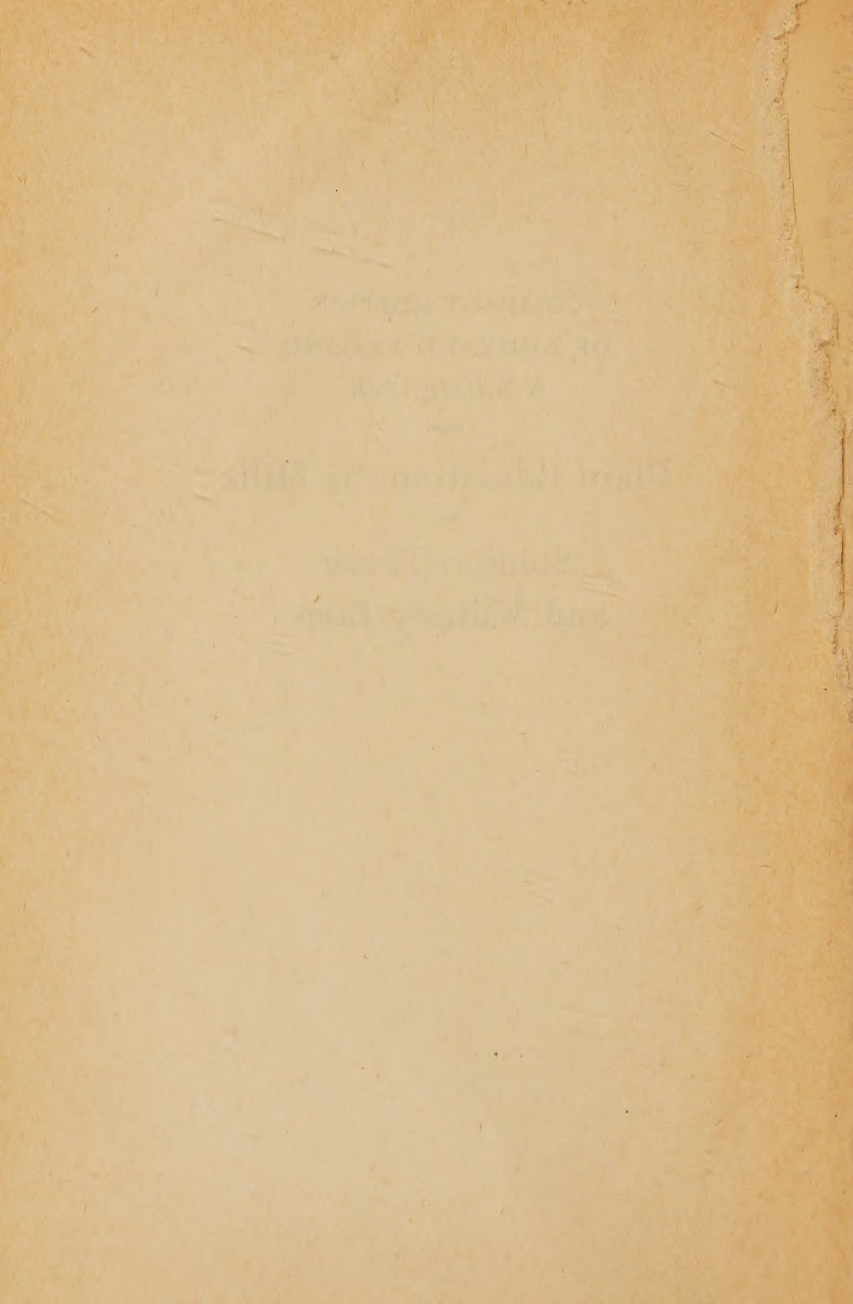
COMPACT EDITION  
OF RUDYARD KIPLING  
VOLUME ONE




Plain Tales from the Hills



Soldiers Three  
and Military Tales

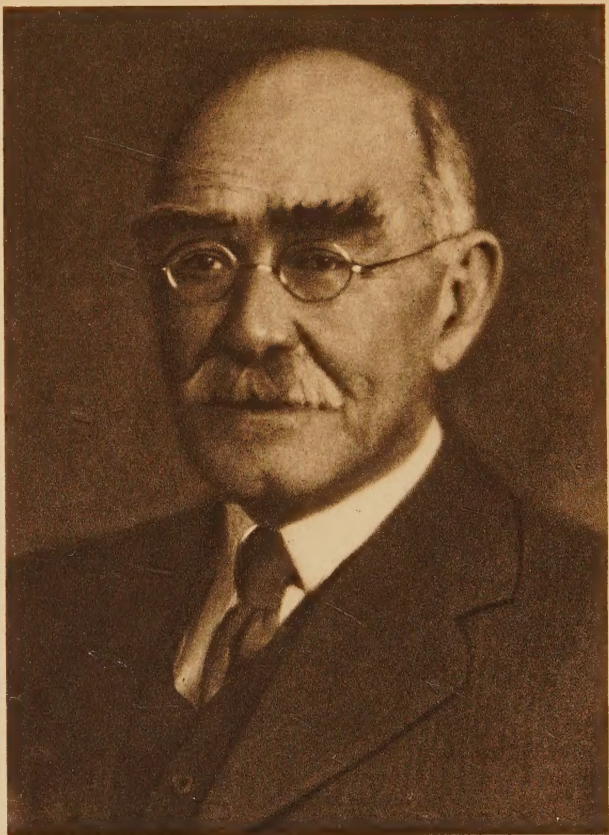






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Rudyard Kipling

Plain Tales  
from the Hills  
&  
Soldiers Three and  
Military Tales

BY  
RUDYARD KIPLING

# Volume One

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NEW YORK · · LONDON

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# INTRODUCTION

## RUDYARD KIPLING

"Kipling is dead." As these words were flashed to the world in the night of January 17-18, 1936, it was realized that there had gone out one of the most distinguished Englishmen of all time. It was the close of the story that never grows old—a boy beginning life in simple and unpretentious surroundings, making his way to the top by dint of his own excelling qualities of mind and persistent effort.

Rudyard Kipling was born in 1865 in India, son of John Lockwood Kipling and Alice MacDonald, the daughter of a Wesleyan clergyman of Staffordshire. At the time of Rudyard's birth the father was a professor of Architectural Sculpture in the British School of Art in Bombay. The boy was named Rudyard after a lake in Staffordshire.

Rudyard was a precocious child who used his eyes so continuously in reading that he was from childhood forced to use spectacles and was called "Beetle" because he stumbled as he walked. His first schooling was in the United Service College at Westward Ho in North Devon where he wrote much for the school paper and also for *The Bideford Journal*, a newspaper of the school town. In 1882, he returned to India and became a reporter on *The Lahore Civil and Military Gazette*, the most influential paper in Northwest India.

Here his flair for the details of Indian life made such an appeal and resulted in so many orders for the old newspapers that young Kipling decided to compile the verses which had appeared in *The Gazette*. He set most of the

## INTRODUCTION

type himself in the composing room of *The Gazette*, did his own binding and called the volume *Departmental Ditties* (1886). Later he described its appearance as "a sort of lean, oblong docket wire-stitched to imitate a D. O. Government envelope, printed on one side only and secured with red tape." By mailing post cards and other announcements, he marketed the book with such success that he wrote in after years, "What I did has since prevented my injuring my health sympathizing with publishers who talk of their risks and the cost of their advertisements."

His first literary success was a similar collection of stories of army and native life in India under the title of *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Then followed *Soldiers Three*, *The Gadsbys*, *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*, and *Wee Willie Winkie*. These green-covered pamphlets, sold at railroad stations, were translated into nearly every language and later these original editions were to collectors worth their weight in gold.

In 1892, Kipling came to the United States and married Caroline Starr Balestier whom he had met the previous year in London. After a wedding trip to Japan they returned to live at Brattleboro, Vermont. Here he wrote *Barrack Room Ballads* and both *Jungle Books*. They went to England in 1897 when he wrote *The Recessional* for the Victoria jubilee. On his return to New York in 1899 he had an attack of pneumonia which was so severe that for a time his life was despaired of. It was then realized that his fame was already universal for messages of sympathy came from his admirers in all parts of the world.

There followed a time of great activity in which he

## INTRODUCTION

wrote some of his best short stories, such as *The Brushwood Boy* and some of his best-known novels, *The Light That Failed*, *Captains Courageous*, and *Kim*. From so many kinds of writing for so many kinds of readers, it would be difficult to select, but there are masterpieces for the young readers, *Jungle Books*, *Just So Stories*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and *Stalky and Co.*, and for lovers of poetry, *Danny Deeever*, *Mandalay*, *Recessional* and probably the most popular poem today in the English-speaking world, *If* —.

Kipling understood the art of the short story in which the concentration is upon the total effect which distinguishes the modern story from the old-fashioned tale. The range is illustrated by the horror as typified by *The Strange Ride of Morrowby Jukes* and *The Mark of the Beast*; the pathos of childhood in the story of *Muhammed Din*; love in *Without Benefit of Clergy*; humor in *My Lord the Elephant* and the realm of the spirit life in *The Brushwood Boy*.

As important a part of his work as his prose was his verse, especially those poems in which he caught so unerringly the characteristics of army life in India. In prose and verse Kipling made his own the theme of human effort, the intensity of man's work, the courage of his defiance of the elements and his miraculous achievements. He created the modern British soldier as a figure of literature. He became the poet of imperialism with a conception of the Anglo-Saxon's function in the world that came to replace the insular patriotism of the earlier national poets. He was the important force which welds the relationship of all communities of Anglo-Saxon blood into an imperial self-consciousness.

## INTRODUCTION

To those who like good reading, Kipling offered a great range in form and content, realism and romance, child and animal psychology, the realm of fancy as well as the world of hard work. He brought a new vitality to English speech, enriching it as few have done by original expression and a clear-cut phrasing that went straight to the mark. To this man, language was a way to say something as only he must and can say it. Therefore, his speech had force, carried conviction, came straight from a fighting, believing Englishman.

But it was not all tempestuous.

"There was a beautiful smell in the air—the smell of white dusk, bruised nettles and smoke, that brings tears to the throat of a man who sees his country but seldom—a smell like the echoes of the lost talk of lovers, the infinitively suggestive odor of an immemorial civilization."

Only one man could have written that.

To Rudyard Kipling came many honors, The Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907, The Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature in 1926, many degrees from colleges and universities and numerous editions of his works, now valued more highly than complete editions of any of his contemporaries.

*The Outward Bound* edition was one of the most successful enterprises of publishing in America as well as one of the most handsome presentations to the public of a modern author. This set is the foundation of the *Compact* edition which is now offered to American readers. One of the last services which Kipling performed was the arrangement for this edition and a general selection of its content.

THE PUBLISHER.



## ILLUSTRATIONS

Rudyard Kipling

*Frontispiece*

From a portrait taken in Paris in 1932, for the Outward Bound Edition of the author's work.

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NOTE: The decorations for this and the following volumes have been modelled in clay by John Lockwood Kipling, C.I.E., and photographed for these reproductions. The seal, with the lotus, represents the elephant-headed Ganesha, the god of auspicious beginnings (with special relation to books).



PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS





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PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS



# PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

## LISPETH

Look, you have cast out Love! What Gods are these  
You bid me please?  
The Three in One, the One in Three? Not so!  
To my own Gods I go.  
It may be they shall give me greater ease  
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

*The Convert.*

SHE was the daughter of Sonoo, a Hill-man of the Himalayas, and Jadéh his wife. One year their maize failed, and two bears spent the night in their only opium poppy-field just above the Suttlej Valley on the Kotgarh side; so, next season, they turned Christian, and brought their baby to the Mission to be baptized. The Kotgarh Chaplain christened her Elizabeth, and "Lispeth" is the Hill or *pahari* pronunciation.

Later, cholera came into the Kotgarh Valley and carried off Sonoo and Jadéh, and Lispeth be-

came half servant, half companion, to the wife of the then Chaplain of Kotgarh. This was after the reign of the Moravian missionaries in that place, but before Kotgarh had quite forgotten her title of "Mistress of the Northern Hills."

Whether Christianity improved Lispeth, or whether the gods of her own people would have done as much for her under any circumstances, I do not know; but she grew very lovely. When a Hill-girl grows lovely, she is worth travelling fifty miles over bad ground to look upon. Lispeth had a Greek face—one of those faces people paint so often, and see so seldom. She was of a pale, ivory colour, and, for her race, extremely tall. Also, she possessed eyes that were wonderful; and, had she not been dressed in the abominable print-cloths affected by Missions, you would, meeting her on the hillside unexpectedly, have thought her the original Diana of the Romans going out to slay.

Lispeth took to Christianity readily, and did not abandon it when she reached womanhood, as do some Hill-girls. Her own people hated her because she had, they said, become a white woman and washed herself daily; and the Chaplain's wife did not know what to do with her. One cannot ask a stately goddess, five foot ten in her shoes, to clean plates and dishes. She played with the Chaplain's children and took classes in

## LISPETH

the Sunday School, and read all the books in the house, and grew more and more beautiful, like the Princesses in fairy tales. The Chaplain's wife said that the girl ought to take service in Simla as a nurse or something "genteel." But Lispeth did not want to take service. She was very happy where she was.

When travellers — there were not many in those years — came in to Kotgarh, Lispeth used to lock herself into her own room for fear they might take her away to Simla, or out into the unknown world.

One day, a few months after she was seventeen years old, Lispeth went out for a walk. She did not walk in the manner of English ladies — a mile and a half out, with a carriage-ride back again. She covered between twenty and thirty miles in her little constitutionals, all about and about, between Kotgarh and Narkunda. This time she came back at full dusk, stepping down the breakneck descent into Kotgarh with something heavy in her arms. The Chaplain's wife was dozing in the drawing-room when Lispeth came in breathing heavily and very exhausted with her burden. Lispeth put it down on the sofa, and said simply, "This is my husband. I found him on the Bagi Road. He has hurt himself. We will nurse him, and when he is well, your husband shall marry him to me."

This was the first mention Lispeth had ever made of her matrimonial views, and the Chaplain's wife shrieked with horror. However, the man on the sofa needed attention first. He was a young Englishman, and his head had been cut to the bone by something jagged. Lispeth said she had found him down the hillside, and had brought him in. He was breathing queerly and was unconscious.

He was put to bed and tended by the Chaplain, who knew something of medicine; and Lispeth waited outside the door in case she could be useful. She explained to the Chaplain that this was the man she meant to marry; and the Chaplain and his wife lectured her severely on the impropriety of her conduct. Lispeth listened quietly, and repeated her first proposition. It takes a great deal of Christianity to wipe out uncivilised Eastern instincts, such as falling in love at first sight. Lispeth, having found the man she worshipped, did not see why she should keep silent as to her choice. She had no intention of being sent away, either. She was going to nurse that Englishman until he was well enough to marry her. This was her programme.

After a fortnight of slight fever and inflammation, the Englishman recovered coherence and thanked the Chaplain and his wife, and Lispeth — especially Lispeth — for their kindness. He was a traveller in the East, he said — they never



talked about "globe-trotters" in those days, when the P. & O. fleet was young and small — and had come from Dehra Dun to hunt for plants and butterflies among the Simla hills. No one at Simla, therefore, knew anything about him. He fancied that he must have fallen over the cliff while reaching out for a fern on a rotten tree-trunk, and that his coolies must have stolen his baggage and fled. He thought he would go back to Simla when he was a little stronger. He desired no more mountaineering.

He made small haste to go away, and recovered his strength slowly. Lispeth objected to being advised either by the Chaplain or his wife; therefore the latter spoke to the Englishman, and told him how matters stood in Lispeth's heart. He laughed a good deal, and said it was very pretty and romantic, but, as he was engaged to a girl at Home, he fancied that nothing would happen. Certainly he would behave with discretion. He did that. Still he found it very pleasant to talk to Lispeth, and walk with Lispeth, and say nice things to her, and call her pet names while he was getting strong enough to go away. It meant nothing at all to him, and everything in the world to Lispeth. She was very happy while the fortnight lasted, because she had found a man to love.

Being a savage by birth, she took no trouble to hide her feelings, and the Englishman was amused.

When he went away, Lispeth walked with him up the Hill as far as Narkunda, very troubled and very miserable. The Chaplain's wife, being a good Christian and disliking anything in the shape of fuss or scandal — Lispeth was beyond her management entirely — had told the Englishman to tell Lispeth that he was coming back to marry her. "She is but a child you know, and, I fear, at heart a heathen," said the Chaplain's wife. So all the twelve miles up the Hill the Englishman, with his arm round Lispeth's waist, was assuring the girl that he would come back and marry her; and Lispeth made him promise over and over again. She wept on the Narkunda Ridge till he had passed out of sight along the Muttiani path.

Then she dried her tears and went in to Kotgarh again, and said to the Chaplain's wife, "He will come back and marry me. He has gone to his own people to tell them so." And the Chaplain's wife soothed Lispeth and said, "He will come back." At the end of two months, Lispeth grew impatient, and was told that the Englishman had gone over the seas to England. She knew where England was, because she had read little geography primers; but, of course, she had no conception of the nature of the sea, being a Hill-girl. There was an old puzzle-map of the World in the house. Lispeth had played with it when she was a child. She unearthed it again, and put it



Lispeth



## LISPETH

together of evenings, and cried to herself, and tried to imagine where her Englishman was. As she had no ideas of distance or steamboats, her notions were somewhat wild. It would not have made the least difference had she been perfectly correct; for the Englishman had no intention of coming back to marry a Hill-girl. He forgot all about her by the time he was butterfly-hunting in Assam. He wrote a book on the East afterwards. Lispeth's name did not appear there.

At the end of three months, Lispeth made daily pilgrimage to Narkunda to see if her Englishman was coming along the road. It gave her comfort, and the Chaplain's wife finding her happier thought that she was getting over her "barbarous and most indelicate folly." A little later, the walks ceased to help Lispeth and her temper grew very bad. The Chaplain's wife thought this a profitable time to let her know the real state of affairs — that the Englishman had only promised his love to keep her quiet — that he had never meant anything, and that it was wrong and improper of Lispeth to think of marriage with an Englishman, who was of a superior clay, besides being promised in marriage to a girl of his own people. Lispeth said that all this was clearly impossible because he had said he loved her, and the Chaplain's wife had, with her own lips, asserted that the Englishman was coming back.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

"How can what he and you said be untrue?" asked Lispeth.

"We said it as an excuse to keep you quiet, child," said the Chaplain's wife.

"Then you have lied to me," said Lispeth, "you and he?"

The Chaplain's wife bowed her head, and said nothing. Lispeth was silent, too, for a little time; then she went out down the valley, and returned in the dress of a Hill-girl — infamously dirty, but without the nose-stud and ear-rings. She had her hair braided into the long pigtail, helped out with black thread, that Hill-women wear.

"I am going back to my own people," said she. "You have killed Lispeth. There is only left old Jadéh's daughter — the daughter of a *pabari* and the servant of *Tarka Devi*. You are all liars, you English."

By the time that the Chaplain's wife had recovered from the shock of the announcement that Lispeth had 'verted to her mother's gods, the girl had gone; and she never came back.

She took to her own unclean people savagely, as if to make up the arrears of the life she had stepped out of; and, in a little time, she married a woodcutter who beat her after the manner of *paharis*, and her beauty faded soon.

"There is no law whereby you can account for the vagaries of the heathen," said the Chaplain's

## LISPETH

wife, "and I believe that Lispeth was always at heart an infidel." Seeing she had been taken into the Church of England at the mature age of five weeks, this statement does not do credit to the Chaplain's wife.

Lispeth was a very old woman when she died. She had always a perfect command of English, and when she was sufficiently drunk, could sometimes be induced to tell the story of her first love-affair.

It was hard then to realise that the bleared, wrinkled creature, exactly like a wisp of charred rag, could ever have been "Lispeth of the Kotgarh Mission."

## THREE AND — AN EXTRA

When halter and heel-ropes are slipped, do not give chase with sticks but with *gram*.—*Punjabi Proverb*.

AFTER marriage arrives a reaction, sometimes a big, sometimes a little one; but it comes sooner or later, and must be tided over by both parties if they desire the rest of their lives to go with the current.

In the case of the Cusack-Bremmils this reaction did not set in till the third year after the wedding. Bremmil was hard to hold at the best of times; but he was a beautiful husband until the baby died and Mrs. Bremmil wore black, and grew thin, and mourned as though the bottom of the Universe had fallen out. Perhaps Bremmil ought to have comforted her. He tried to do so, but the more he comforted the more Mrs. Bremmil grieved, and, consequently, the more uncomfortable grew Bremmil. The fact was that they both needed a tonic. And they got it. Mrs. Bremmil can afford to laugh now, but it was no laughing matter to her at the time.

Mrs. Hauksbee appeared on the horizon; and where she existed was fair chance of trouble. At



### THREE AND——AN EXTRA

Simla her by-name was the "Stormy Petrel." She had won that title five times to my own certain knowledge. She was a little, brown, thin, almost skinny, woman, with big, rolling, violet-blue eyes, and the sweetest manners in the world. You had only to mention her name at afternoon teas for every woman in the room to rise up, and call her not blessed. She was clever, witty, brilliant, and sparkling beyond most of her kind; but possessed of many devils of malice and mischievousness. She could be nice, though, even to her own sex. But that is another story.

Bremmil went off at score after the baby's death and the general discomfort that followed, and Mrs. Hauksbee annexed him. She took no pleasure in hiding her captives. She annexed him publicly, and saw that the public saw it. He rode with her, and walked with her, and talked with her, and picnicked with her, and tiffined at Peliti's with her, till people put up their eyebrows and said, "Shocking!" Mrs. Bremmil stayed at home turning over the dead baby's frocks and crying into the empty cradle. She did not care to do anything else. But some eight dear, affectionate lady-friends explained the situation at length to her in case she should miss the cream of it. Mrs. Bremmil listened quietly, and thanked them for their good offices. She was not as clever as Mrs. Hauksbee, but she was no fool. She kept her own counsel,

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

and did not speak to Bremmil of what she had heard. This is worth remembering. Speaking to, or crying over, a husband never did any good yet.

When Bremmil was at home, which was not often, he was more affectionate than usual; and that showed his hand. The affection was forced partly to soothe his own conscience and partly to soothe Mrs. Bremmil. It failed in both regards.

Then "the A.-D.-C. in Waiting was commanded by Their Excellencies, Lord and Lady Lytton, to invite Mr. and Mrs. Cusack-Bremmil to Peterhoff on July 26 at 9-30 P. M."—"Dancing" in the bottom-left-hand corner.

"I can't go," said Mrs. Bremmil, "it is too soon after poor little Florrie . . . but it need not stop you, Tom."

She meant what she said then, and Bremmil said that he would go just to put in an appearance. Here he spoke the thing which was not; and Mrs. Bremmil knew it. She guessed—a woman's guess is much more accurate than a man's certainty—that he had meant to go from the first, and with Mrs. Hauksbee. She sat down to think, and the outcome of her thoughts was that the memory of a dead child was worth considerably less than the affections of a living husband. She made her plan and staked her all upon it. In that hour she discovered that she knew Tom Bremmil thoroughly, and this knowledge she acted on.

### THREE AND——AN EXTRA

“Tom,” said she, “I shall be dining out at the Longmores’ on the evening of the 26th. You’d better dine at the Club.”

This saved Bremmil from making an excuse to get away and dine with Mrs. Hauksbee, so he was grateful, and felt small and mean at the same time — which was wholesome. Bremmil left the house at five for a ride. About half-past five in the evening a large leather-covered basket came in from Phelps’s for Mrs. Bremmil. She was a woman who knew how to dress; and she had not spent a week on designing that dress and having it gored, and hemmed, and herring-boned, and tucked and rucked (or whatever the terms are), for nothing. It was a gorgeous dress — slight mourning. I can’t describe it, but it was what “The Queen” calls “a creation” — a thing that hit you straight between the eyes and made you gasp. She had not much heart for what she was going to do; but as she glanced at the long mirror she had the satisfaction of knowing that she had never looked so well in her life. She was a large blonde and, when she chose, carried herself superbly.

After the dinner at the Longmores’, she went on to the dance — a little late — and encountered Bremmil with Mrs. Hauksbee on his arm. That made her flush, and as the men crowded round her for dances she looked magnificent. She filled up all her dances except three, and those she left

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

blank. Mrs. Hauksbee caught her eye once; and she knew it was war—real war—between them. She started handicapped in the struggle, for she had ordered Bremmil about just the least little bit in the world too much; and he was beginning to resent it. Moreover, he had never seen his wife look so lovely. He stared at her from doorways, and glared at her from passages as she went about with her partners; and the more he stared, the more taken was he. He could scarcely believe that this was the woman with the red eyes and the black stuff gown who used to weep over the eggs at breakfast.

Mrs. Hauksbee did her best to hold him in play, but, after two dances, he crossed over to his wife and asked for a dance.

“I’m afraid you’ve come too late, *Mister Bremmil*,” she said, with her eyes twinkling.

Then he begged her to give him a dance, and, as a great favour, she allowed him the fifth waltz. Luckily Five stood vacant on his programme. They danced it together, and there was a little flutter round the room. Bremmil had a sort of a notion that his wife could dance, but he never knew she danced so divinely. At the end of that waltz he asked for another—as a favour, not as a right; and Mrs. Bremmil said, “Show me your programme, dear!” He showed it as a naughty little schoolboy hands up contraband sweets to a

### THREE AND—AN EXTRA

master. There was a fair sprinkling of "H" on it, besides "H" at supper. Mrs. Bremmil said nothing, but she smiled contemptuously, ran her pencil through Seven and Nine—two "H's"—and returned the card with her own name written above—a pet name that only she and her husband used. Then she shook her finger at him, and said laughing, "Oh you silly, *silly* boy!"

Mrs. Hauksbee heard that, and—she owned as much—felt she had the worst of it. Bremmil accepted Seven and Nine gratefully. They danced Seven, and sat out Nine in one of the little tents. What Bremmil said and what Mrs. Bremmil did is no concern of any one.

When the band struck up "The Roast Beef of Old England," the two went out into the verandah, and Bremmil began looking for his wife's dandy (this was before 'rickshaw days) while she went into the cloak-room. Mrs. Hauksbee came up and said, "You take me in to supper, I think, Mr. Bremmil?" Bremmil turned red and looked foolish, "Ah—h'm! I'm going home with my wife, Mrs. Hauksbee. I think there has been a little mistake." Being a man, he spoke as though Mrs. Hauksbee were entirely responsible.

Mrs. Bremmil came out of the cloak-room in a swansdown cloak with a white "cloud" round her head. She looked radiant; and she had a right to.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

The couple went off into the darkness together, Bremmil riding very close to the dandy.

Then said Mrs. Hauksbee to me — she looked a trifle faded and jaded in the lamplight — “Take my word for it, the silliest woman can manage a clever man; but it needs a very clever woman to manage a fool.”

Then we went in to supper.

## THROWN AWAY

And some are sulky, while some will plunge.

[*So ho! Steady! Stand still, you!*]

Some you must gentle, and some you must lunge.

[*There! There! Who wants to kill you?*]

Some — there are losses in every trade —

Will break their hearts ere bitted and made,

Will fight like fiends as the rope cuts hard,

And die dumb-mad in the breaking-yard.

*Toolungala Stockyard Chorus.*

To rear a boy under what parents call the “sheltered life system” is, if the boy must go into the world and fend for himself, not wise. Unless he be one in a thousand he has certainly to pass through many unnecessary troubles; and may, possibly, come to extreme grief simply from ignorance of the proper proportions of things.

Let a puppy eat the soap in the bath-room or chew a newly-blacked boot. He chews and chuckles until, by and by, he finds out that blacking and Old Brown Windsor make him very sick; so he argues that soap and boots are not wholesome. Any old dog about the house will soon show him the un wisdom of biting big dogs’



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

ears. Being young, he remembers and goes abroad, at six months, a well-mannered little beast with a chastened appetite. If he had been kept away from boots, and soap, and big dogs till he came to the trinity full-grown and with developed teeth, consider how fearfully sick and thrashed he would be! Apply that notion to the "sheltered life," and see how it works. It does not sound pretty, but it is the better of two evils.

There was a Boy once who had been 'brought up under the "sheltered life" theory; and the theory killed him dead. He stayed with his people all his days, from the hour he was born till the hour he went into Sandhurst nearly at the top of the list. He was beautifully taught in all that wins marks by a private tutor, and carried the extra weight of "never having given his parents an hour's anxiety in his life." What he learnt at Sandhurst beyond the regular routine is of no great consequence. He looked about him, and he found soap and blacking, so to speak, very good. He ate a little, and came out of Sandhurst not so high as he went in. Then there was an interval and a scene with his people, who expected much from him. Next a year of living unspotted from the world in a third-rate dépôt battalion where all the juniors were children and all the seniors old women; and lastly he came out to India where he was cut off from the support of his parents, and had no



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one to fall back on in time of trouble except himself.

Now India is a place beyond all others where one must not take things too seriously — the mid-day sun always excepted. Too much work and too much energy kill a man just as effectively as too much assorted vice or too much drink. Flirtation does not matter, because every one is being transferred and either you or she leave the Station, and never return. Good work does not matter, because a man is judged by his worst output and another man takes all the credit of his best as a rule. Bad work does not matter, because other men do worse and incompetents hang on longer in India than anywhere else. Amusements do not matter, because you must repeat them as soon as you have accomplished them once, and most amusements only mean trying to win another person's money. Sickness does not matter, because it's all in the day's work, and if you die, another man takes over your place and your office in the eight hours between death and burial. Nothing matters except Home-furlough and acting allowances, and these only because they are scarce. It is a slack country where all men work with imperfect instruments; and the wisest thing is to escape as soon as ever you can to some place where amusement is amusement and a reputation worth the having.

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But this Boy — the tale is as old as the Hills — came out, and took all things seriously. He was pretty and was petted. He took the pettings seriously and fretted over women not worth saddling a pony to call upon. He found his new free life in India very good. It does look attractive in the beginning, from a subaltern's point of view — all ponies, partners, dancing, and so on. He tasted it as the puppy tastes the soap. Only he came late to the eating, with a grown set of teeth. He had no sense of balance — just like the puppy — and could not understand why he was not treated with the consideration he received under his father's roof. This hurt his feelings.

He quarrelled with other boys and, being sensitive to the marrow, remembered these quarrels, and they excited him. He found whist, and gymkhanas, and things of that kind (meant to amuse one after office), good; but he took them seriously too, just as seriously as he took the "head" that followed after drink. He lost his money over whist and gymkhanas because they were new to him.

He took his losses seriously, and wasted as much energy and interest over a two-goldmohur race for maiden *ekka*-ponies with their manes hogged, as if it had been the Derby. One half of this came from inexperience — much as the puppy squabbles with the corner of the hearth-

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rug—and the other half from the dizziness bred by stumbling out of his quiet life into the glare and excitement of a livelier one. No one told him about the soap and the blacking, because an average man takes it for granted that an average man is ordinarily careful in regard to them. It was pitiful to watch The Boy knocking himself to pieces, as an over-handled colt falls down and cuts himself when he gets away from the groom.

This unbridled license in amusements not worth the trouble of breaking line for, much less rioting over, endured for six months—all through one cold weather—and then we thought that the heat and the knowledge of having lost his money and health and lamed his horses would sober The Boy down, and he would stand steady. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this would have happened. You can see the principle working in any Indian Station. But this particular case fell through because The Boy was sensitive and took things seriously—as I may have said some seven times before. Of course, we could not tell how his excesses struck him personally. They were nothing very heartbreaking or above the average. He might be crippled for life financially, and want a little nursing. Still the memory of his performances would wither away in one hot weather, and the bankers would help him to tide over the money-troubles. But he must have taken an-

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other view altogether and have believed himself ruined beyond redemption. His Colonel talked to him severely when the cold weather ended. That made him more wretched than ever; and it was only an ordinary "Colonel's wiggling"!

What follows is a curious instance of the fashion in which we are all linked together and made responsible for one another. *The* thing that kicked the beam in The Boy's mind was a remark that a woman made when he was talking to her. There is no use in repeating it, for it was only a cruel little sentence, rapped out before thinking, that made him flush to the roots of his hair. He kept himself to himself for three days, and then put in for two days' leave to go shooting near a Canal Engineer's Rest House about thirty miles out. He got his leave, and that night at Mess was noisier and more offensive than ever. He said that he was "going to shoot big game," and left at half-past ten o'clock in an *ekka*. Partridge — which was the only thing a man could get near the Rest House — is not big game; so every one laughed.

Next morning one of the Majors came in from short leave, and heard that The Boy had gone out to shoot "big game." The Major had taken an interest in The Boy, and had, more than once, tried to check him. The Major put up his eye-

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brows when he heard of the expedition, and went to The Boy's rooms where he rummaged.

Presently he came out and found me leaving cards on the Mess. There was no one else in the ante-room.

He said, "The Boy has gone out shooting. *Does* a man shoot *tetur* with a revolver and writing-case?"

I said, "Nonsense, Major!" for I saw what was in his mind.

He said, "Nonsense or no nonsense, I'm going to the Canal now—at once. I don't feel easy."

Then he thought for a minute, and said, "Can you lie?"

"You know best," I answered. "It's my profession."

"Very well," said the Major, "you must come out with me now—at once—in an *ekka* to the Canal to shoot black-buck. Go and put on *sbikar-kit*—*quick*—and drive here with a gun."

The Major was a masterful man; and I knew that he would not give orders for nothing. So I obeyed, and on return found the Major packed up in an *ekka*—gun-cases and food slung below—all ready for a shooting-trip.

He dismissed the driver and drove himself. We jogged along quietly while in the Station; but, as soon as we got to the dusty road across the

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plains, he made that pony fly. A country-bred can do nearly anything at a pinch. We covered the thirty miles in under three hours, but the poor brute was nearly dead.

Once I said, "What's the blazing hurry, Major?"

He said quietly, "The Boy has been alone, by himself for—one, two, five,—fourteen hours now! I tell you, I don't feel easy."

This uneasiness spread itself to me, and I helped to beat the pony.

When we came to the Canal Engineer's Rest House the Major called for The Boy's servant; but there was no answer. Then we went up to the house, calling for The Boy by name; but there was no answer.

"Oh, he's out shooting," said I.

Just then, I saw through one of the windows a little hurricane-lamp burning. This was at four in the afternoon. We both stopped dead in the verandah, holding our breath to catch every sound; and we heard, inside the room, the "*brr—brr—brr*" of a multitude of flies. The Major said nothing, but he took off his helmet and we entered very softly.

The Boy was dead on the bed in the centre of the bare, lime-washed room. He had shot his head nearly to pieces with his revolver. The gun-cases were still strapped, so was the bedding, and on the table lay The Boy's writing-case with

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photographs. He had gone away to die like a poisoned rat!

The Major said to himself softly, "Poor Boy! Poor, *poor* devil!" Then he turned away from the bed and said, "I want your help in this business."

Knowing The Boy was dead by his own hand, I saw exactly what that help would be, so I passed over to the table, took a chair, lit a cheroot, and began to go through the writing-case; the Major looking over my shoulder and repeating to himself, "We came too late!—Like a rat in a hole! —Poor, *poor* devil!"

The Boy must have spent half the night in writing to his people, to his Colonel, and to a girl at Home; and as soon as he had finished, must have shot himself, for he had been dead a long time when we came in.

I read all that he had written, and passed over each sheet to the Major as I finished it.

We saw from his accounts how very seriously he had taken everything. He wrote about "disgrace which he was unable to bear"—"indelible shame"—"criminal folly"—"wasted life," and so on; besides a lot of private things to his father and mother much too sacred to put into print. The letter to the girl at Home was the most pitiful of all; and I choked as I read it. The Major made no attempt to keep dry-eyed. I respected him for that. He read and rocked himself to and



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fro, and simply cried like a woman without caring to hide it. The letters were so dreary and hopeless and touching. We forgot all about The Boy's follies, and only thought of the poor Thing on the bed and the scrawled sheets in our hands. It was utterly impossible to let the letters go Home. They would have broken his father's heart and killed his mother after killing her belief in her son.

At last the Major dried his eyes openly, and said, "Nice sort of thing to spring on an English family! What shall we do?"

I said, knowing what the Major had brought me out for, "The Boy died of cholera. We were with him at the time. We can't commit ourselves to half-measures. Come along."

Then began one of the most grimly comic scenes I have ever taken part in — the concoction of a big, written lie, bolstered with evidence, to soothe The Boy's people at Home. I began the rough draft of the letter, the Major throwing in hints here and there while he gathered up all the stuff that The Boy had written and burnt it in the fire-place. It was a hot, still evening when we began, and the lamp burned very badly. In due course I made the draft to my satisfaction, setting forth how The Boy was the pattern of all virtues, beloved by his regiment, with every promise of a great career before him, and so on: how we had

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helped him through the sickness — it was no time for little lies you will understand — and how he had died without pain. I choked while I was putting down these things and thinking of the poor people who would read them. Then I laughed at the grotesqueness of the affair, and the laughter mixed itself up with the choke — and the Major said that we both wanted drinks.

I am afraid to say how much whisky we drank before the letter was finished. It had not the least effect on us. Then we took off The Boy's watch, locket, and rings.

Lastly, the Major said, "We must send a lock of hair too. A woman values that."

But there were reasons why we could not find a lock fit to send. The Boy was black-haired, and so was the Major, luckily. I cut off a piece of the Major's hair above the temple with a knife, and put it into the packet we were making. The laughing-fit and the chokes got hold of me again, and I had to stop. The Major was nearly as bad; and we both knew that the worst part of the work was to come.

We sealed up the packet, photographs, locket, seals, ring, letter, and lock of hair with The Boy's sealing-wax and The Boy's seal.

Then the Major said, "For God's sake let's get outside — away from the room — and think!"

We went outside, and walked on the banks of

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the Canal for an hour, eating and drinking what we had with us, until the moon rose. I know now exactly how a murderer feels. Finally, we forced ourselves back to the room with the lamp and the Other Thing in it, and began to take up the next piece of work. I am not going to write about this. It was too horrible. We burned the bedstead and dropped the ashes into the Canal; we took up the matting of the room and treated that in the same way. I went off to a village and borrowed two big hoes,—I did not want the villagers to help,—while the Major arranged — the other matters. It took us four hours' hard work to make the grave. As we worked, we argued out whether it was right to say as much as we remembered of the Burial of the Dead. We compromised things by saying the Lord's Prayer with a private unofficial prayer for the peace of the soul of The Boy. Then we filled in the grave and went into the verandah — not the house — to lie down to sleep. We were dead-tired.

When we woke the Major said wearily, "We can't go back till to-morrow. We must give him a decent time to die in. He died early *this* morning, remember. That seems more natural." So the Major must have been lying awake all the time, thinking.

I said, "Then why didn't we bring the body back to cantonments?"

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The Major thought for a minute. "Because the people bolted when they heard of the cholera. And the *ekka* has gone!"

That was strictly true. We had forgotten all about the *ekka*-pony, and he had gone home.

So we were left there alone, all that stifling day, in the Canal Rest House, testing and re-testing our story of The Boy's death to see if it was weak in any point. A native appeared in the afternoon, but we said that a *Sabib* was dead of cholera, and he ran away. As the dusk gathered, the Major told me all his fears about The Boy, and awful stories of suicide or nearly-carried-out suicide — tales that made one's hair crisp. He said that he himself had once gone into the same Valley of the Shadow as The Boy, when he was young and new to the country; so he understood how things fought together in The Boy's poor jumbled head. He also said that youngsters, in their repentant moments, consider their sins much more serious and inef-faceable than they really are. We talked together all through the evening and rehearsed the story of the death of The Boy. As soon as the moon was up, and The Boy, theoretically, just buried, we struck across country for the Station. We walked from eight till six o'clock in the morning; but though we were dead-tired, we did not forget to go to The Boy's rooms and put away his revolver with the proper amount of cartridges in the pouch.

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Also to set his writing-case on the table. We found the Colonel and reported the death, feeling more like murderers than ever. Then we went to bed and slept the clock round; for there was no more in us.

The tale had credence as long as was necessary; for every one forgot about The Boy before a fortnight was over. Many people, however, found time to say that the Major had behaved scandalously in not bringing in the body for a regimental funeral. The saddest thing of all was the letter from The Boy's mother to the Major and me—with big inky blisters all over the sheet. She wrote the sweetest possible things about our great kindness, and the obligation she would be under to us as long as she lived.

All things considered, she was under an obligation; but not exactly as she meant.

## MISS YOUGHAL'S SAIS

When Man and Woman are agreed, what can the Kazi do ?

*Proverb.*

SOME people say that there is no romance in India. Those people are wrong. Our lives hold quite as much romance as is good for us. Sometimes more.

Strickland was in the Police, and people did not understand him; so they said he was a doubtful sort of man and passed by on the other side. Strickland had himself to thank for this. He held the extraordinary theory that a Policeman in India should try to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves. Now, in the whole of Upper India, there is only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mahommedan, hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases. He is feared and respected by the natives from the Ghor Kathri to the Jamma Musjid; and he is supposed to have the gift of invisibility and executive control over many Devils. But this has done him no good in the eyes of the Indian Government.

Strickland was foolish enough to take that man for his model; and, following out his absurd theory, dabbled in unsavoury places no respectable man

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would think of exploring — all among the native riff-raff. He educated himself in this peculiar way for seven years, and people could not appreciate it. He was perpetually “going Fantee” among natives, which, of course, no man with any sense believes in. He was initiated into the *Sat Bhai* at Allahabad once, when he was on leave; he knew the Lizzard-Song of the Sansis, and the *Hállí-Hukk* dance, which is a religious can-can of a startling kind. When a man knows who dance the *Hállí-Hukk*, and how, and when, and where, he knows something to be proud of. He has gone deeper than the skin. But Strickland was not proud, though he had helped once, at Jagadhri, at the Painting of the Death Bull, which no Englishman must even look upon; had mastered the thieves’-patter of the *chángars*; had taken a Eusufzai horse-thief alone near Attock; and had stood under the sounding-board of a Border mosque and conducted service in the manner of a Sunni Mollah.

His crowning achievement was spending eleven days as a *faqir* or priest in the gardens of Baba Atal at Amritsar, and there picking up the threads of the great Nasiban Murder Case. But people said, justly enough, “Why on earth can’t Strickland sit in his office and write up his diary, and recruit, and keep quiet, instead of showing up the incapacity of his seniors?” So the Nasiban Murder Case did him no good departmentally; but, after



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his first feeling of wrath, he returned to his outlandish custom of prying into native life. When a man once acquires a taste for this particular amusement, it abides with him all his days. It is the most fascinating thing in the world; Love not excepted. Where other men took ten days to the Hills, Strickland took leave for what he called *shikar*, put on the disguise that appealed to him at the time, stepped down into the brown crowd, and was swallowed up for a while. He was a quiet, dark young fellow — spare, black-eyed — and, when he was not thinking of something else, a very interesting companion. Strickland on Native Progress as he had seen it was worth hearing. Natives hated Strickland; but they were afraid of him. He knew too much.

When the Youghals came into the Station, Strickland — very gravely, as he did everything — fell in love with Miss Youghal; and she, after a while, fell in love with him because she could not understand him. Then Strickland told the parents; but Mrs. Youghal said she was not going to throw her daughter into the worst paid Department in the Empire, and old Youghal said, in so many words, that he mistrusted Strickland's ways and works, and would thank him not to speak or write to his daughter any more. "Very well," said Strickland, for he did not wish to make his lady-love's life a burden. After one long talk



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with Miss Youghal he dropped the business entirely.

The Youghals went up to Simla in April.

In July Strickland secured three months' leave on "urgent private affairs." He locked up his house—though not a native in the Province would wittingly have touched "Estreekin Sahib's" gear for the world—and went down to see a friend of his, an old dyer, at Tarn Taran.

Here all trace of him was lost, until a *sais* or groom met me on the Simla Mall with this extraordinary note:—

DEAR OLD MAN,—Please give bearer a box of cheroots—Supers, No. 1, for preference. They are freshest at the Club. I'll repay when I reappear; but at present I'm out of society.

Yours,

E. STRICKLAND.

I ordered two boxes, and handed them over to the *sais* with my love. That *sais* was Strickland, and was in old Youghal's employ, attached to Miss Youghal's Arab. The poor fellow was suffering for an English smoke, and knew that, whatever happened, I should hold my tongue till the business was over.

Later on, Mrs. Youghal, who was wrapped up in her servants, began talking at houses where she called of her paragon among *saises*—the man who was never too busy to get up in the morning

and pick flowers for the breakfast-table, and who blacked — actually *blacked* — the hoofs of his horse like a London coachman! The turn-out of Miss Youghal's Arab was a wonder and a delight. Strickland — Dulloo, I mean — found his reward in the pretty things that Miss Youghal said to him when she went out riding. Her parents were pleased to find she had forgotten all her foolishness for young Strickland and said she was a good girl.

Strickland vows that the two months of his service were the most rigid mental discipline he has ever gone through. Quite apart from the little fact that the wife of one of his fellow-*saises* fell in love with him and then tried to poison him with arsenic because he would have nothing to do with her, he had to school himself into keeping quiet when Miss Youghal went out riding with some man who tried to flirt with her, and he was forced to trot behind carrying the blanket and hearing every word! Also, he had to keep his temper when he was slanged in the theatre porch by a policeman — especially once when he was abused by a Naik he had himself recruited from Isser Jang village — or, worse still, when a young subaltern called him a pig for not making way quickly enough.

But the life had its compensations. He obtained great insight into the ways and thefts of *saises* —

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enough he says to have summarily convicted half the population of the Punjab if he had been on business. He became one of the leading players at knuckle-bones, which all *jhampânis* and many *saises* play while they are waiting outside the Government House or the Gaiety Theatre of nights; he learned to smoke tobacco that was three-fourths cowdung; and he heard the wisdom of the grizzled Jemadar of the Government House grooms. Whose words are valuable. He saw many things which amused him; and he states, on honour, that no man can appreciate Simla properly, till he has seen it from the *sais's* point of view. He also says that, if he chose to write all he saw, his head would be broken in several places.

Strickland's account of the agony he endured on wet nights, hearing the music and seeing the lights in "Benmore," with his toes tingling for a waltz and his head in a horse-blanket, is rather amusing. One of these days, Strickland is going to write a little book on his experiences. That book will be worth buying; and even more worth suppressing.

Thus, he served faithfully as Jacob served for Rachel; and his leave was nearly at an end when the explosion came. He had really done his best to keep his temper in the hearing of the flirtations I have mentioned; but he broke down at last. An old and very distinguished General took Miss

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Youghal for a ride, and began that specially offensive "you're-only-a-little-girl" sort of flirtation — most difficult for a woman to turn aside deftly, and most maddening to listen to. Miss Youghal was shaking with fear at the things he said in the hearing of her *sais*. Dulloo — Strickland — stood it as long as he could. Then he caught hold of the General's bridle, and, in most fluent English, invited him to step off and be flung over the cliff. Next minute, Miss Youghal began to cry; and Strickland saw that he had hopelessly given himself away, and everything was over.

The General nearly had a fit, while Miss Youghal was sobbing out the story of the disguise and the engagement that was not recognised by the parents. Strickland was furiously angry with himself, and more angry with the General for forcing his hand; so he said nothing, but held the horse's head and prepared to thrash the General as some sort of satisfaction. But when the General had thoroughly grasped the story, and knew who Strickland was, he began to puff and blow in the saddle, and nearly rolled off with laughing. He said Strickland deserved a V. C., if it were only for putting on a *sais's* blanket. Then he called himself names, and vowed that he deserved a thrashing, but he was too old to take it from Strickland. Then he complimented Miss Youghal on her lover. The scandal of the business never struck him; for he was a nice

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old man, with a weakness for flirtations. Then he laughed again, and said that old Youghal was a fool. Strickland let go of the cob's head, and suggested that the General had better help them, if that was his opinion. Strickland knew Youghal's weakness for men with titles and letters after their names and high official position. "It's rather like a forty-minute farce," said the General, "but, begad, I *will* help, if it's only to escape that tremendous thrashing I deserve. Go along to your home, my *sais*-Policeman, and change into decent kit, and I'll attack Mr. Youghal. Miss Youghal, may I ask you to canter home and wait?"

. . . . .

About seven minutes later, there was a wild hurroosh at the Club. A *sais*, with blanket and head-rope, was asking all the men he knew: "For Heaven's sake lend me decent clothes!" As the men did not recognise him, there were some peculiar scenes before Strickland could get a hot bath, with soda in it, in one room, a shirt here, a collar there, a pair of trousers elsewhere, and so on. He galloped off, with half the Club wardrobe on his back, and an utter stranger's pony under him, to the house of old Youghal. The General, arrayed in purple and fine linen, was before him. What the General had said Strickland never knew, but Youghal received Strickland with moderate civility; and Mrs. Youghal, touched by the devotion

of the transformed Dulloo, was almost kind. The General beamed and chuckled, and Miss Youghal came in, and, almost before old Youghal knew where he was, the parental consent had been wrenched out, and Strickland had departed with Miss Youghal to the Telegraph Office to wire for his European kit. The final embarrassment was when a stranger attacked him on the Mall and asked for the stolen pony.

In the end, Strickland and Miss Youghal were married, on the strict understanding that Strickland should drop his old ways, and stick to Departmental routine, which pays best and leads to Simla. Strickland was far too fond of his wife, just then, to break his word, but it was a sore trial to him; for the streets and the bazars, and the sounds in them, were full of meaning to Strickland, and these called to him to come back and take up his wanderings and his discoveries. Some day, I will tell you how he broke his promise to help a friend. That was long since, and he has, by this time, been nearly spoilt for what he would call *shikar*. He is forgetting the slang, and the beggar's cant, and the marks, and the signs, and the drift of the under-currents, which, if a man would master, he must always continue to learn.

But he fills in his Departmental returns beautifully.

## BITTERS NEAT

THE oldest trouble in the world comes from want of understanding. And it is entirely the fault of the woman. Somehow, she is built incapable of speaking the truth, even to herself. She only finds it out about four months later, when the man is dead, or has been transferred. Then she says she never was so happy in her life, and marries some one else, who again touched some woman's heart elsewhere, and did not know it, but was mixed up with another man's wife, who only used him to pique a third man. And so round again—all criss-cross.

Out here, where life goes quicker than at Home, things are more obviously tangled, and therefore more pitiful to look at. Men speak the truth as they understand it, and women as they think men would like to understand it; and then they all act lies which would deceive Solomon, and the result is a heart-rending muddle that half a dozen open words would put straight.

This particular muddle did not differ from any other muddle you may see, if you are not busy



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playing cross-purposes yourself, going on in a big Station any cold season. Its only merit was that it did not come all right in the end; as muddles are made to do in the third volume.

I've forgotten what the man was—he was an ordinary sort of man—'man you meet any day at the A.-D.-C.'s end of the table, and go away and forget about. His name was Surrey; but whether he was in the Army or the P. W. D., or the Commissariat, or the Police, or a factory, I don't remember. He wasn't a Civilian. He was just an ordinary man, of the light-coloured variety, with a fair moustache and with the average amount of pay that comes between twenty-seven and thirty-two—from six to nine hundred a month.

He didn't dance, and he did what little riding he wanted to do by himself, and was busy in office all day, and never bothered his head about women. No man ever dreamed he would. He was of the type that doesn't marry, just because it doesn't think about marriage. He was one of the plain cards, whose only use is to make up the pack, and furnish background to put the Court cards against.

Then there was a girl—ordinary girl—the dark-coloured variety—daughter of a man in the Army, who played a little, sang a little, talked a little, and furnished the background, exactly as Surrey did. She had been sent out here to get married if she could, because there were many sisters at home,



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and Colonels' allowances aren't elastic. She lived with an aunt. She was a Miss Tallaght, and men spelt her name "Tart" on the programmes when they couldn't catch what the introducer said.

Surrey and she were thrown together in the same Station one cold weather; and the particular Devil who looks after muddles prompted Miss Tallaght to fall in love with Surrey. He had spoken to her perhaps twenty times—certainly not more—but she fell as unreasoningly in love with him as if she had been Elaine and he Lancelot.

She, of course, kept her own counsel; and, equally of course, her manner to Surrey, who never noticed manner or style or dress any more than he noticed a sunset, was icy, not to say repellent. The deadly dullness of Surrey struck her as reserve of force, and she grew to believe he was wonderfully clever in some secret and mysterious sort of line. She did not know what line; but she believed, and that was enough. No one suspected anything of any kind, for the simple reason that no one took any deep interest in Miss Tallaght except her Aunt; who wanted to get the girl off her hands.

This went on for some months, till a man suddenly woke up to the fact that Miss Tallaght was the one woman in the world for him, and told her so. She *jawabed* him—without rhyme or reason; and that night there followed one of those awful

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bedroom conferences that men know nothing about. Miss Tallaght's Aunt, querulous, indignant, and merciless, with her mouth full of hair-pins, and her hands full of false hair-plaits, set herself to find out by cross-examination what in the name of everything wise, prudent, religious and dutiful, Miss Tallaght meant by *jawabing* her suitor. The conference lasted for an hour and a half, with question on question, insult and reminders of poverty—appeals to Providence, then a fresh mouthful of hair-pins—then all the questions over again, beginning with:—"But *what* do you see to dislike in Mr. ——?" then, a vicious tug at what was left of the mane; then impressive warnings and more appeals to Heaven; and then the collapse of poor Miss Tallaght, a rumped, crumpled, tear-stained arrangement in white on the couch at the foot of the bed, and, between sobs and gasps, the whole absurd little story of her love for Surrey.

Now, in all the forty-five years' experience of Miss Tallaght's Aunt, she had never heard of a girl throwing over a real genuine lover with an appointment, for a problematical, hypothetical lover to whom she had spoken merely in the course of the ordinary social visiting rounds. So Miss Tallaght's Aunt was struck dumb, and, merely praying that Heaven might direct Miss Tallaght into a better frame of mind, dismissed

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the *ayah*, and went to bed; leaving Miss Tallaght to sob and moan herself to sleep.

Understand clearly, I don't for a moment defend Miss Tallaght. She was wrong—absurdly wrong—but attachments like hers *must* sprout by the law of averages, just to remind people that Love is as nakedly unreasoning as when Venus first gave him his kit and told him to run away and play.

Surrey must be held innocent—innocent as his own pony. Could he guess that, when Miss Tallaght was as curt and as unpleasing as she knew how, she would have risen up and followed him from Colombo to Dadar at a word? He didn't know anything, or care anything about Miss Tallaght. He had his work to do.

Miss Tallaght's Aunt might have respected her niece's secret. But she didn't. What we call "talking rank scandal," she called "seeking advice;" and she sought advice, on the case of Miss Tallaght, from the Judge's wife "in strict confidence, my dear," who told the Commissioner's wife, "of course you won't repeat it, my dear," who told the Deputy Commissioner's wife, "you understand it is to go no further, my dear," who told the newest bride, who was so delighted at being in possession of a secret concerning real grown-up men and women, that she told any one and every one who called on her. So the tale went all over the Station, and from being no one

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in particular, Miss Tallaght came to take precedence of the last interesting squabble between the Judge's wife and the Civil Engineer's wife. Then began a really interesting system of persecution worked by women—soft and sympathetic and intangible, but calculated to drive a girl off her head. They were all *so* sorry for Miss Tallaght, and they cooed together and were exaggeratedly kind and sweet in their manner to her, as those who said:—"You may confide in *us*, my stricken deer!"

Miss Tallaght was a woman and sensitive. It took her less than one evening at the Band Stand to find that her poor little, precious little secret, that had been wrenched from her on the rack, was known as widely as if it had been written on her hat. I don't know what she went through. Women don't speak of these things, and men ought not to guess; but it must have been some specially refined torture, for she told her Aunt she would go Home and die as a Governess sooner than stay in this hateful—hateful—place. Her Aunt said she was a rebellious girl, and sent her Home to her people after a couple of months; and said no one knew what the pains of a *chaperone's* life were.

Poor Miss Tallaght had one pleasure just at the last. Half way down the line, she caught a glimpse of Surrey, who had gone down on duty,

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and was then in the up-train. And he took off his hat to her. She went Home, and if she is not dead by this time must be living still.

. . . . .

Months afterwards, there was a lively dinner at the Club for the Races. Surrey was mooning about as usual, and there was a good deal of idle talk flying every way. Finally, one man, who had taken more than was good for him, said, *apropos* of something about Surrey's reserved ways,—“Ah, you old fraud. It's all very well for you to pretend. I know a girl who was awf'ly mashed on you—once. Dead nuts she was on old Surrey. What had you been doing, eh?”

Surrey expected some sort of sell, and said with a laugh:—

“Who was she?”

Before any one could kick the man, he plumped out with the name; and the Honorary Secretary tactfully upset the half of a big brew of shandy-gaff all over the table. After the mopping up, the men went out to the Lotteries.

But Surrey sat on, and, after ten minutes, said very humbly to the only other man in the deserted dining-room:—“On your honour, was there a word of truth in what the drunken fool said?”

Then the man who is writing this story, who had known of the thing from the beginning, and now felt all the hopelessness and tangle of it—the

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waste and the muddle — said, a good deal more energetically than he meant:—

“Truth! O man, man, couldn’t you *see* it?”

Surrey said nothing, but sat still, smoking and smoking and thinking, while the Lottery tent babbled outside, and the *khitmutgars* turned down the lamps.

To the best of my knowledge and belief that was the first thing Surrey ever knew about love. But his awakening did not seem to delight him. It must have been rather unpleasant, to judge by the look on his face. He looked like a man who had missed a train and had been half stunned at the same time.

When the men came in from the Lotteries, Surrey went out. He wasn’t in the mood for bones and “horse” talk. He went to his tent, and the last thing he said, quite aloud to himself, was:—“I didn’t see. I didn’t see. If I had *only* known!”

Even if he had known I don’t believe . . .

But these things are *kismet*, and we only find out all about them just when any knowledge is too late.

## “YOKED WITH AN UNBELIEVER”

I am dying for you, and you are dying for another.

*Punjabi Proverb.*

WHEN the Gravesend tender left the P. & O. steamer for Bombay and went back to catch the train to Town, there were many people in it crying. But the one who wept most, and most openly, was Miss Agnes Laiter. She had reason to cry, because the only man she ever loved—or ever could love, so she said—was going out to India; and India, as every one knows, is divided equally between jungle, tigers, cobras, cholera, and sepoy.

Phil Garron, leaning over the side of the steamer in the rain, felt very unhappy too; but he did not cry. He was sent out to “tea.” What “tea” meant he had not the vaguest idea, but fancied that he would have to ride on a prancing horse over hills covered with tea-vines, and draw a sumptuous salary for doing so; and he was very grateful to his uncle for getting him the berth. He was really going to reform all his slack, shiftless ways, save a large proportion of his magnificent salary yearly, and, in a very short time, return to marry Agnes Laiter. Phil Garron had been lying



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loose on his friends' hands for three years, and, as he had nothing to do, he naturally fell in love. He was very nice; but he was not strong in his views and opinions and principles, and though he never came to actual grief his friends were thankful when he said good-bye, and went out to this mysterious "tea" business near Darjiling. They said, "God bless you, dear boy! Let us never see your face again,"—or at least that was what Phil was given to understand.

When he sailed, he was very full of a great plan to prove himself several hundred times better than any one had given him credit for—to work like a horse, and triumphantly marry Agnes Laiter. He had many good points besides his good looks; his only fault being that he was weak, the least little bit in the world weak. He had as much notion of economy as the Morning Sun; and yet you could not lay your hand on any one item, and say, "Herein Phil Garron is extravagant or reckless." Nor could you point out any particular vice in his character; but he was "unsatisfactory" and as workable as putty.

Agnes Laiter went about her duties at home—her family objected to the engagement—with red eyes, while Phil was sailing to Darjiling—a "port on the Bengal Ocean," as his mother used to tell her friends. He was popular enough on boardship, made many acquaintances and a moderately

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large liquor-bill, and sent off huge letters to Agnes Laiter at each port. Then he fell to work on this plantation, somewhere between Darjiling and Kangra, and, though the salary and the horse and the work were not quite all he had fancied, he succeeded fairly well, and gave himself much unnecessary credit for his perseverance.

In the course of time, as he settled more into collar, and his work grew fixed before him, the face of Agnes Laiter went out of his mind and only came when he was at leisure, which was not often. He would forget all about her for a fortnight, and remember her with a start, like a school-boy who has forgotten to learn his lesson. She did not forget Phil, because she was of the kind that never forgets. Only, another man—a really desirable young man—presented himself before Mrs. Laiter; and the chance of a marriage with Phil was as far off as ever; and his letters were so unsatisfactory; and there was a certain amount of domestic pressure brought to bear on the girl; and the young man really was an eligible person as incomes go; and the end of all things was that Agnes married him, and wrote a tempestuous whirlwind of a letter to Phil in the wilds of Darjiling, and said she should never know a happy moment all the rest of her life. Which was a true prophecy.

Phil received that letter, and held himself ill-

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treated. This was two years after he had come out; but by dint of thinking fixedly of Agnes Laiter, and looking at her photograph, and patting himself on the back for being one of the most constant lovers in history, and warming to the work as he went on, he really fancied that he had been very hardly used. He sat down and wrote one final letter — a really pathetic “world without end, amen,” epistle; explaining how he would be true to Eternity, and that all women were very much alike, and he would hide his broken heart, etc., etc.; but if, at any future time, etc., etc., he could afford to wait, etc., etc., unchanged affections, etc., etc., return to her old love, etc., etc., for eight closely-written pages. From an artistic point of view, it was very neat work, but an ordinary Philistine, who knew the state of Phil’s real feelings — not the ones he rose to as he went on writing — would have called it the thoroughly mean and selfish work of a thoroughly mean and selfish weak man. But this verdict would have been incorrect. Phil paid for the postage, and felt every word he had written for at least two days and a half. It was the last flicker before the light went out.

That letter made Agnes Laiter very unhappy, and she cried and put it away in her desk, and became Mrs. Somebody Else for the good of her family. Which is the first duty of every Christian maid.

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Phil went his ways, and thought no more of his letter, except as an artist thinks of a neatly touched-in sketch. His ways were not bad, but they were not altogether good until they brought him across Dunmaya, the daughter of a Rajput ex-Subadar-Major of our Native Army. The girl had a strain of Hill blood in her, and like the Hill-women, was not a *purdah-nashin* or woman who lives behind the veil. Where Phil met her, or how he heard of her, does not matter. She was a good girl and handsome, and, in her way, very clever and shrewd; though, of course, a little hard. It is to be remembered that Phil was living very comfortably, denying himself no small luxury, never putting by a penny, very satisfied with himself and his good intentions, was dropping all his English correspondents one by one, and beginning more and more to look upon India as his home. Some men fall this way; and they are of no use afterwards. The climate where he was stationed was good, and it really did not seem to him that there was any reason to return to England.

He did what many planters have done before him—that is to say, he made up his mind to marry a Hill-girl and settle down. He was seven-and-twenty then, with a long life before him, but no spirit to go through with it. So he married Dunmaya by the forms of the English Church,

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and some fellow-planters said he was a fool, and some said he was a wise man. Dunmaya was a thoroughly honest girl, and, in spite of her reverence for an Englishman, had a reasonable estimate of her husband's weaknesses. She managed him tenderly, and became, in less than a year, a very passable imitation of an English lady in dress and carriage. It is curious to think that a Hill-man after a lifetime's education is a Hill-man still; but a Hill-woman can in six months master most of the ways of her English sisters. There was a coolie-woman once. But that is another story. Dunmaya dressed by preference in black and yellow and looked well.

Meantime Phil's letter lay in Agnes Laiter's desk, and now and again she would think of poor, resolute, hard-working Phil among the cobras and tigers of Darjiling, toiling in the vain hope that she might come back to him. Her husband was worth ten Phils, except that he had rheumatism of the heart. Three years after he was married,—and after he had tried Nice and Algeria for his complaint,—he went to Bombay, where he died, and set Agnes free. Being a devout woman, she looked on his death and the place of it, as a direct interposition of Providence, and when she had recovered from the shock, she took out and re-read Phil's letter with the “etc., etc.,” and the big dashes, and the little dashes, and kissed several

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times. No one knew her in Bombay; she had her husband's income, which was a large one, and Phil was close at hand. It was wrong and improper, of course, but she decided, as heroines do in novels, to find her old lover, to offer him her hand and her gold, and with him spend the rest of her life in some spot far from unsympathetic souls. She sat for two months, alone in Watson's Hotel, elaborating this decision, and the picture was a pretty one. Then she set out in search of Phil Garron, Assistant on a tea plantation with a more than usually unpronounceable name.

. . . . .  
She found him. She spent a month over it, for his plantation was not in the Darjiling district at all, but nearer Kangra. Phil was very little altered, and Dunmaya was very nice to her.

Now the particular sin and shame of the whole business is that Phil, who really is not worth thinking of twice, was and is loved by Dunmaya, and more than loved by Agnes, the whole of whose life he seems to have spoilt.

Worst of all, Dunmaya is making a decent man of him; and he will ultimately be saved from perdition through her training.

Which is manifestly unfair.



## FALSE DAWN

To-night God knows what thing shall tide,  
The Earth is racked and faint—  
Expectant, sleepless, open-eyed ;  
And we, who from the Earth were made,  
Thrill with our Mother's pain.

*In Durance.*

No man will ever know the exact truth of this story ; though women may sometimes whisper it to one another after a dance, when they are putting up their hair for the night and comparing lists of victims. A man, of course, cannot assist at these functions. So the tale must be told from the outside—in the dark—all wrong.

Never praise a sister to a sister, in the hope of your compliments reaching the proper ears, and so preparing the way for you later on. Sisters are women first, and sisters afterwards ; and you will find that you do yourself harm.

Saumarez knew this when he made up his mind to propose to the elder Miss Copleigh. Saumarez was a strange man, with few merits so far as men could see, though he was popular with women, and carried enough conceit to stock a Viceroy's



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Council and leave a little over for the Commander in-Chief's Staff. He was a Civilian. Very many women took an interest in Saumarez, perhaps, because his manner to them was offensive. If you hit a pony over the nose at the outset of your acquaintance, he may not love you, but he will take a deep interest in your movements ever afterwards. The elder Miss Copleigh was nice, plump, winning, and pretty. The younger was not so pretty, and, from men disregarding the hint set forth above, her style was repellant and unattractive. Both girls had, practically, the same figure, and there was a strong likeness between them in look and voice; though no one could doubt for an instant which was the nicer of the two.

Saumarez made up his mind, as soon as they came into the Station from Behar, to marry the elder one. At least, we all made sure that he would, which comes to the same thing. She was two-and-twenty, and he was thirty-three, with pay and allowances of nearly fourteen hundred rupees a month. So the match, as we arranged it, was in every way a good one. Saumarez was his name, and summary was his nature, as a man once said. Having drafted his Resolution, he formed a Select Committee of One to sit upon it, and resolved to take his time. In our unpleasant slang, the Copleigh girls "hunted in couples." That is to say, you could do nothing with one

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without the other. They were very loving sisters; but their mutual affection was sometimes inconvenient. Saumarez held the balance-true between them, and none but himself could have said to which side his heart inclined; though every one guessed. He rode with them a good deal and danced with them, but he never succeeded in detaching them from each other for any length of time.

Women said that the two girls kept together through deep mistrust, each fearing that the other would steal a march on her. But that has nothing to do with a man. Saumarez was silent for good or bad, and as business-likely attentive as he could be, having due regard to his work and his polo. Beyond doubt both girls were fond of him.

As the hot weather drew nearer and Saumarez made no sign, women said that you could see their trouble in the eyes of the girls—that they were looking strained, anxious, and irritable. Men are quite blind in these matters unless they have more of the woman than the man in their composition, in which case it does not matter what they say or think. I maintain it was the hot April days that took the colour out of the Copleigh girls' cheeks. They should have been sent to the Hills early. No one—man or woman—feels an angel when the hot weather is approaching. The younger sister grew more cynical, not to say acid, in her ways:

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and the winningness of the elder wore thin. There was effort in it.

The Station wherein all these things happened was, though not a little one, off the line of rail, and suffered through want of attention. There were no gardens, or bands or amusements worth speaking of, and it was nearly a day's journey to come into Lahore for a dance. People were grateful for small things to interest them.

About the beginning of May, and just before the final exodus of Hill-goers, when the weather was very hot and there were not more than twenty people in the Station, Saumarez gave a moonlight riding-picnic at an old tomb, six miles away, near the bed of the river. It was a "Noah's Ark" picnic; and there was to be the usual arrangement of quarter-mile intervals between each couple, on account of the dust. Six couples came altogether, including chaperones. Moonlight picnics are useful just at the very end of the season, before all the girls go away to the Hills. They lead to understandings, and should be encouraged by chaperones; especially those whose girls look sweetest in riding-habits. I knew a case once. But that is another story. That picnic was called the "Great Pop Picnic," because every one knew Saumarez would propose then to the eldest Miss Copleigh; and, besides his affair, there was another which might possibly come to happiness. The

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social atmosphere was heavily charged and wanted clearing.

We met at the parade-ground at ten : the night was fearfully hot. The horses sweated even at walking-pace, but anything was better than sitting still in our own dark houses. When we moved off under the full moon we were four couples, one triplet, and Me. Saumarez rode with the Copleigh girls, and I loitered at the tail of the procession wondering with whom Saumarez would ride home. Every one was happy and contented ; but we all felt that things were going to happen. We rode slowly ; and it was nearly midnight before we reached the old tomb, facing the ruined tank, in the decayed gardens where we were going to eat and drink. I was late in coming up ; and, before I went into the garden, I saw that the horizon to the north carried a faint, dun-coloured feather. But no one would have thanked me for spoiling so well-managed an entertainment as this picnic — and a dust-storm, more or less, does no great harm.

We gathered by the tank. Some one had brought out a banjo — which is a most sentimental instrument — and three or four of us sang. You must not laugh at this. Our amusements in out-of-the-way Stations are very few indeed. Then we talked in groups or together, lying under the trees, with the sun-baked roses dropping their pet-

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als on our feet, until supper was ready. It was a beautiful supper, as cold and as iced as you could wish; and we stayed long over it.

I had felt that the air was growing hotter and hotter; but nobody seemed to notice it until the moon went out and a burning hot wind began lashing the orange-trees with a sound like the noise of the sea. Before we knew where we were, the dust-storm was on us and everything was roaring, whirling darkness. The supper-table was blown bodily into the tank. We were afraid of staying anywhere near the old tomb for fear it might be blown down. So we felt our way to the orange-trees where the horses were picketed and waited for the storm to blow over. Then the little light that was left vanished, and you could not see your hand before your face. The air was heavy with dust and sand from the bed of the river, that filled boots and pockets and drifted down necks and coated eyebrows and moustaches. It was one of the worst dust-storms of the year. We were all huddled together close to the trembling horses, with the thunder chattering overhead, and the lightning spurting like water from a sluice, all ways at once. There was no danger, of course, unless the horses broke loose. I was standing with my head downwind and my hands over my mouth, hearing the trees thrashing each other. I could not see who was next me till the flashes

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came. Then I found that I was packed near Saumarez and the eldest Miss Copleigh, with my own horse just in front of me. I recognised the eldest Miss Copleigh, because she had a puggree round her helmet, and the younger had not. All the electricity in the air had gone into my body and I was quivering and tingling from head to foot—exactly as a corn shoots and tingles before rain. It was a grand storm. The wind seemed to be picking up the earth and pitching it to leeward in great heaps; and the heat beat up from the ground like the heat of the Day of Judgment.

The storm lulled slightly after the first half-hour, and I heard a despairing little voice close to my ear, saying to itself, quietly and softly, as if some lost soul were flying about with the wind, "O my God!" Then the younger Miss Copleigh stumbled into my arms, saying, "Where is my horse? Get my horse. I want to go home. I want to go home. Take me home."

I thought that the lightning and the black darkness had frightened her; so I said there was no danger, but she must wait till the storm blew over. She answered, "It is not that! I want to go home! Oh take me away from here!"

I said that she could not go till the light came; but I felt her brush past me and go away. It was too dark to see where. Then the whole sky was split open with one tremendous flash, as if the



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end of the world were coming, and all the women shrieked.

Almost directly after this, I felt a man's hand on my shoulder and heard Saumarez bellowing in my ear. Through the rattling of the trees and howling of the wind, I did not catch his words at once, but at last I heard him say, "I've proposed to the wrong one! What shall I do?" Saumarez had no occasion to make this confidence to me. I was never a friend of his, nor am I now; but I fancy neither of us were ourselves just then. He was shaking as he stood with excitement, and I was feeling queer all over with the electricity. I could not think of anything to say except, "More fool you for proposing in a dust-storm." But I did not see how that would improve the mistake.

Then he shouted, "Where's Edith — Edith Copleigh?" Edith was the younger sister. I answered out of my astonishment, "What do you want with *her*?" For the next two minutes, he and I were shouting at each other like maniacs,—he vowing that it was the younger sister he had meant to propose to all along, and I telling him till my throat was hoarse that he must have made a mistake! I cannot account for this except, again, by the fact that we were neither of us ourselves. Everything seemed to me like a bad dream—from the stamping of the horses in the



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darkness to Saumarez telling me the story of his loving Edith Copleigh from the first. He was still clawing my shoulder and begging me to tell him where Edith Copleigh was, when another lull came and brought light with it, and we saw the dust-cloud forming on the plain in front of us. So we knew the worst was over. The moon was low down, and there was just the glimmer of the false dawn that comes about an hour before the real one. But the light was very faint, and the dun cloud roared like a bull. I wondered where Edith Copleigh had gone; and as I was wondering I saw three things together: First, Maud Copleigh's face come smiling out of the darkness and move towards Saumarez who was standing by me. I heard the girl whisper, "George," and slide her arm through the arm that was not clawing my shoulder, and I saw that look on her face which only comes once or twice in a lifetime—when a woman is perfectly happy and the air is full of trumpets and gorgeously-coloured fire and the Earth turns into cloud because she loves and is loved. At the same time, I saw Saumarez's face as he heard Maud Copleigh's voice, and fifty yards away from the clump of orange-trees, I saw a brown holland habit getting upon a horse.

It must have been my state of over-excitement that made me so ready to meddle with what did not concern me. Saumarez was moving off to

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the habit; but I pushed him back and said, "Stop here and explain. I'll fetch her back!" And I ran out to get at my own horse. I had a perfectly unnecessary notion that everything must be done decently and in order, and that Saumarez's first care was to wipe the happy look out of Maud Copleigh's face. All the time I was linking up the curb-chain I wondered how he would do it.

I cantered after Edith Copleigh, thinking to bring her back slowly on some pretence or another. But she galloped away as soon as she saw me, and I was forced to ride after her in earnest. She called back over her shoulder—"Go away! I'm going home. Oh, go away!" two or three times; but my business was to catch her first, and argue later. The ride fitted in with the rest of the evil dream. The ground was very rough, and now and again we rushed through the whirling, choking "dust-devils" in the skirts of the flying storm. There was a burning hot wind blowing that brought up a stench of stale brick-kilns with it; and through the half light and through the dust-devils, across that desolate plain, flickered the brown holland habit on the gray horse. She headed for the Station at first. Then she wheeled round and set off for the river through beds of burnt-down jungle-grass, bad even to ride pig over. In cold blood I should never have dreamed of going over such a country at night,

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but it seemed quite right and natural with the lightning crackling overhead, and a reek like the smell of the Pit in my nostrils. I rode and shouted, and she bent forward and lashed her horse, and the aftermath of the dust-storm came up, and caught us both, and drove us downwind like pieces of paper.

I don't know how far we rode; but the drumming of the horse-hoofs and the roar of the wind and the race of the faint blood-red moon through the yellow mist seemed to have gone on for years and years, and I was literally drenched with sweat from my helmet to my gaiters when the gray stumbled, recovered himself and pulled up dead lame. My brute was used up altogether. Edith Copleigh was bareheaded, plastered with dust, and crying bitterly. "Why can't you let me alone?" she said. "I only wanted to get away and go home. Oh, *please* let me go!"

"You have got to come back with me, Miss Copleigh. Saumarez has something to say to you."

It was a foolish way of putting it; but I hardly knew Miss Copleigh, and, though I was playing Providence at the cost of my horse, I could not tell her in as many words what Saumarez had told me. I thought he could do that better himself. All her pretence about being tired and wanting to go home broke down, and she rocked her-

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self to and fro in the saddle as she sobbed, and the hot wind blew her black hair to leeward. I am not going to repeat what she said, because she was utterly unstrung.

This was the cynical Miss Copleigh, and I, almost an utter stranger to her, was trying to tell her that Saumarez loved her and she was to come back to hear him say so. I believe I made myself understood, for she gathered the gray together and made him hobble somehow, and we set off for the tomb, while the storm went thundering down to Umballa and a few big drops of warm rain fell. I found out that she had been standing close to Saumarez when he proposed to her sister, and had wanted to go home to cry in peace, as an English girl should. She dabbed her eyes with her pocket-handkerchief as we went along, and babbled to me out of sheer lightness of heart and hysteria. That was perfectly unnatural; and yet, it seemed all right at the time and in the place. All the world was only the two Copleigh girls, Saumarez and I, ringed in with the lightning and the dark; and the guidance of this misguided world seemed to lie in my hands.

When we returned to the tomb in the deep dead stillness that followed the storm, the dawn was just breaking and nobody had gone away. They were waiting for our return. Saumarez most of all. His face was white and drawn. As

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Miss Copleigh and I limped up, he came forward to meet us, and, when he helped her down from her saddle, he kissed her before all the picnic. It was like a scene in a theatre, and the likeness was heightened by all the dust-white, ghostly-looking men and women under the orange-trees clapping their hands—as if they were watching a play—at Saumarez's choice. I never knew anything so un-English in my life.

Lastly, Saumarez said we must all go home or the Station would come out to look for us, and would I be good enough to ride home with Maud Copleigh? Nothing would give me greater pleasure, I said.

So we formed up, six couples in all, and went back two by two; Saumarez walking at the side of Edith Copleigh, who was riding his horse. Maud Copleigh did not talk to me at any length.

The air was cleared; and, little by little, as the sun rose, I felt we were all dropping back again into ordinary men and women, and that the "Great Pop Picnic" was a thing altogether apart and out of the world—never to happen again. It had gone with the dust-storm and the tingle in the hot air.

I felt tired and limp, and a good deal ashamed of myself as I went in for a bath and some sleep.

There is a woman's version of this story, but it will never be written . . . unless Maud Copleigh cares to try.

## THE RESCUE OF PLUFFLES

Thus, for a season, they fought it fair—  
She and his cousin May —  
Tactful, talented, debonnaire,  
Decorous foes were they ;  
But never can battle of man compare  
With merciless feminine fray.

*Two and One.*

MRS. HAUKS BEE was sometimes nice to her own sex. Here is a story to prove this; and you can believe just as much as ever you please.

Pluffles was a subaltern in the “Unmentionables.” He was callow, even for a subaltern. He was callow all over — like a canary that had not finished fledging itself. The worst of it was that he had three times as much money as was good for him; Pluffles’ Papa being a rich man and Pluffles being the only son. Pluffles’ Mamma adored him. She was only a little less callow than Pluffles, and she believed everything he said.

Pluffles’ weakness was not believing what people said. He preferred what he called trusting to his own judgment. He had as much judgment as he had seat or hands; and this preference tumbled



## THE RESCUE OF PLUFFLES

nim into trouble once or twice. But the biggest trouble Pluffles ever manufactured came about at Simla—some years ago, when he was four-and-twenty.

He began by trusting to his own judgment as usual, and the result was that, after a time, he was bound hand and foot to Mrs. Reiver's 'rickshaw wheels.

There was nothing good about Mrs. Reiver, unless it was her dress. She was bad from her hair—which started life on a Brittany girl's head—to her boot-heels, which were two and three-eighth inches high. She was not honestly mischievous like Mrs. Hauksbee; she was wicked in a business-like way.

There was never any scandal—she had not generous impulses enough for that. She was the exception which proved the rule that Anglo-Indian ladies are in every way as nice as their sisters at Home. She spent her life in proving that rule.

Mrs. Hauksbee and she hated each other fervently. They hated far too much to clash; but the things they said of each other were startling—not to say original. Mrs. Hauksbee was honest—honest as her own front teeth—and, but for her love of mischief, would have been a woman's woman. There was no honesty about Mrs. Reiver; nothing but selfishness. And at the beginning of the season, poor little Pluffles fell a prey



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

to her. She laid herself out to that end, and who was Pluffles to resist? He trusted to his judgment, and he got judged.

I have seen Captain Hayes argue with a tough horse — I have seen a tonga-driver coerce a stubborn pony — I have seen a riotous setter broken to gun by a hard keeper — but the breaking-in of Pluffles of the “Unmentionables” was beyond all these. He learned to fetch and carry like a dog, and to wait like one, too, for a word from Mrs. Reiver. He learned to keep appointments which Mrs. Reiver had no intention of keeping. He learned to take thankfully dances which Mrs. Reiver had no intention of giving him. He learned to shiver for an hour and a quarter on the windward side of Elysium while Mrs. Reiver was making up her mind to come for a ride. He learned to hunt for a ’rickshaw, in a light dress-suit under pelting rain, and to walk by the side of that ’rickshaw when he had found it. He learned what it was to be spoken to like a coolie and ordered about like a cook. He learned all this and many other things besides. And he paid for his schooling.

Perhaps, in some hazy way, he fancied that it was fine and impressive, that it gave him a status among men, and was altogether the thing to do. It was nobody’s business to warn Pluffles that he was unwise. The pace that season was too good to inquire; and meddling with another man’s folly

## THE RESCUE OF PLUFFLES

is always thankless work. Pluffles' Colonel should have ordered him back to his regiment when he heard how things were going. But Pluffles had got himself engaged to a girl in England the last time he went Home; and, if there was one thing more than another that the Colonel detested, it was a married subaltern. He chuckled when he heard of the education of Pluffles, and said it was good training for the boy. But it was not good training in the least. It led him into spending money beyond his means, which were good; above that, the education spoilt an average boy and made it a tenth-rate man of an objectionable kind. He wandered into a bad set, and his little bill at the jeweller's was a thing to wonder at. Then Mrs. Hauksbee rose to the occasion. She played her game alone, knowing what people would say of her; and she played it for the sake of a girl she had never seen. Pluffles' *fiancée* was to come out, under chaperonage of an aunt, in October to be married to Pluffles.

At the beginning of August, Mrs. Hauksbee discovered that it was time to interfere. A man who rides much knows exactly what a horse is going to do next before he does it. In the same way, a woman of Mrs. Hauksbee's experience knows accurately how a boy will behave under certain circumstances—notably when he is infatuated with one of Mrs. Reiver's stamp. She said

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that, sooner or later, little Pluffles would break off that engagement for nothing at all—simply to gratify Mrs. Reiver, who, in return, would keep him at her feet and in her service just so long as she found it worth her while. She said she knew the signs of these things. If she did not no one else could.

Then she went forth to capture Pluffles under the guns of the enemy; just as Mrs. Cusack-Bremmil carried away Bremmil under Mrs. Hauksbee's eyes.

This particular engagement lasted seven weeks—we called it the Seven Weeks' War—and was fought out inch by inch on both sides. A detailed account would fill a book, and would be incomplete then. Any one who knows about these things can fit in the details for himself. It was a superb fight—there will never be another like it as long as Jakko Hill stands—and Pluffles was the prize of victory. People said shameful things about Mrs. Hauksbee. They did not know what she was playing for. Mrs. Reiver fought partly because Pluffles was useful to her, but mainly because she hated Mrs. Hauksbee, and the matter was a trial of strength between them. No one knows what Pluffles thought. He had not many ideas at the best of times, and the few he possessed made him conceited. Mrs. Hauksbee said, "The boy must be caught; and the only way of catching him is by treating him well."

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So she treated him as a man of the world and of experience so long as the issue was doubtful. Little by little, Pluffles fell away from his old allegiance and came over to the enemy, by whom he was made much of. He was never sent on outpost duty after 'rickshaws any more, nor was he given dances which never came off, nor were the drains on his purse continued. Mrs. Hauksbee held him on the snaffle; and, after his treatment at Mrs. Reiver's hands, he appreciated the change. Mrs. Reiver had broken him of talking about himself, and made him talk about her own merits. Mrs. Hauksbee acted otherwise, and won his confidence, till he mentioned his engagement to the girl at Home, speaking of it in a high and mighty way as a piece of boyish folly. This was when he was taking tea with her one afternoon, and discoursing in what he considered a gay and fascinating style. Mrs. Hauksbee had seen an earlier generation of his stamp bud and blossom, and decay into fat Captains and tubby Majors.

At a moderate estimate there were about three-and-twenty sides to that lady's character. Some men say more. She began to talk to Pluffles after the manner of a mother, and as if there had been three hundred years, instead of fifteen, between them. She spoke with a sort of throaty quaver in her voice which had a soothing effect, though what she said was anything but soothing.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

She pointed out the exceeding folly, not to say meanness, of Pluffles' conduct, and the smallness of his views. Then he stammered something about "trusting to his own judgment as a man of the world"; and this paved the way for what she wanted to say next. It would have withered up Pluffles had it come from any other woman; but, in the soft cooing style in which Mrs. Hauksbee put it, it only made him feel limp and repentant — as if he had been in some superior kind of church. Little by little, very softly and pleasantly, she began taking the conceit out of Pluffles, as they take the ribs out of an umbrella before re-covering it. She told him what she thought of him and his judgment and his knowledge of the world; and how his performances had made him ridiculous to other people; and how it was his intention to make love to herself if she gave him the chance. Then she said that marriage would be the making of him; and drew a pretty little picture — all rose and opal — of the Mrs. Pluffles of the future going through life relying on the judgment and knowledge of the world of a husband who had nothing to reproach himself with. How she reconciled these two statements she alone knew. But they did not strike Pluffles as conflicting.

Hers was a perfect little homily — much better than any clergyman could have given — and it

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ended with touching allusions to Pluffles' Mamma and Papa, and the wisdom of taking his bride Home.

Then she sent Pluffles out for a walk, to think over what she had said. Pluffles left, blowing his nose very hard and holding himself very straight. Mrs. Hauksbee laughed.

What Pluffles had intended to do in the matter of the engagement only Mrs. Reiver knew, and she kept her own counsel to her death. She would have liked it spoiled as a compliment, I fancy.

Pluffles enjoyed many talks with Mrs. Hauksbee during the next few days. They were all to the same end, and they helped Pluffles in the path of Virtue.

Mrs. Hauksbee wanted to keep him under her wing to the last. Therefore she discountenanced his going down to Bombay to get married. "Goodness only knows what might happen by the way!" she said. "Pluffles is cursed with the curse of Reuben, and India is no fit place for him!"

In the end, the *fiancée* arrived with her aunt; and Pluffles, having reduced his affairs to some sort of order — here again Mrs. Hauksbee helped him — was married.

Mrs. Hauksbee gave a sigh of relief when both the "I wills" had been said, and went her way.

Pluffles took her advice about going Home.

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He left the Service and is now raising speckled cattle inside green painted fences somewhere in England. I believe he does this very judiciously. He would have come to extreme grief in India.

For these reasons, if any one says anything more than usually nasty about Mrs. Hauksbee, tell him the story of the Rescue of Pluffles.



## CUPID'S ARROWS

Pit where the buffalo cooled his hide,  
By the hot sun emptied, and blistered and dried ;  
Log in the plume-grass, hidden and lone ;  
Dam where the earth-rat's mounds are strown ;  
Cave in the bank where the sly stream steals ;  
Aloe that stabs at the belly and heels,  
Jump if you dare on a steed untried —  
Safer it is to go wide — go wide !  
*Hark, from in front where the best men ride : —*  
*“ Pull to the off, boys ! Wide ! Go wide ! ”*

*The Peora Hunt.*

ONCE upon a time there lived at Simla a very pretty girl, the daughter of a poor but honest District and Sessions Judge. She was a good girl but could not help knowing her power and using it. Her Mamma was very anxious about her daughter's future, as all good Mammias should be.

When a man is a Commissioner and a bachelor and has the right of wearing open-work jam-tart jewels in gold and enamel on his clothes, and of going through a door before every one except a Member of Council, a Lieutenant-Governor, or a Viceroy, he is worth marrying. At least, that is what ladies say. There was a Commissioner in

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Simla, in those days, who was, and wore and did all I have said. He was a plain man—an ugly man—the ugliest man in Asia, with two exceptions. His was a face to dream about and try to carve on a pipe-head afterwards. His name was Saggott — Barr-Saggott — Anthony Barr-Saggott and six letters to follow. Departmentally, he was one of the best men the Government of India owned. Socially, he was like unto a blandishing gorilla.

When he turned his attentions to Miss Beighton, I believe that Mrs. Beighton wept with delight at the reward Providence had sent her in her old age.

Mr. Beighton held his tongue. He was an easy-going man.

A Commissioner is very rich. His pay is beyond the dreams of avarice—is so enormous that he can afford to save and scrape in a way that would almost discredit a Member of Council. Most Commissioners are mean; but Barr-Saggott was an exception. He entertained royally; he horsed himself well; he gave dances; he was a power in the land; and he behaved as such.

Consider that everything I am writing of took place in an almost pre-historic era in the history of British India. Some folk may remember the years before lawn-tennis was born when we all played croquet. There were seasons before that,

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if you will believe me, when even croquet had not been invented, and archery — which was revived in England in 1844 — was as great a pest as lawn-tennis is now. People talked learnedly about “holding” and “loosing,” “steles,” “reflexed bows,” “56-pound bows,” “backed” or “self-yew bows,” as we talk about “rallies,” “volleys,” “smashes,” “returns,” and “16-ounce rackets.”

Miss Beighton shot divinely over ladies' distance — 60 yards, that is — and was acknowledged the best lady archer in Simla. Men called her “Diana of Tara-Devi.”

Barr-Saggott paid her great attention; and, as I have said, the heart of her mother was uplifted in consequence. Kitty Beighton took matters more calmly. It was pleasant to be singled out by a Commissioner with letters after his name, and to fill the hearts of other girls with bad feelings. But there was no denying the fact that Barr-Saggott was phenomenally ugly; and all his attempts to adorn himself only made him more grotesque. He was not christened “The *Langur*” — which means gray ape — for nothing. It was pleasant, Kitty thought, to have him at her feet, but it was better to escape from him and ride with the graceless Cubbon — the man in a Dragoon Regiment at Umballa — the boy with a handsome face, and no prospects. Kitty liked Cubbon more than a little. He never pretended for a moment that he was

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

anything less than head over heels in love with her; for he was an honest boy. So Kitty fled, now and again, from the stately wooings of Barr-Saggott to the company of young Cubbon, and was scolded by her Mamma in consequence. "But, Mother," she said, "Mr. Saggott is such — such a — is so *fearfully* ugly, you know!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Beighton piously, "we cannot be other than an all-ruling Providence has made us. Besides, you will take precedence of your own Mother, you know! Think of that and be reasonable."

Then Kitty put up her little chin and said irreverent things about precedence, and Commissioners, and matrimony. Mr. Beighton rubbed the top of his head; for he was an easy-going man.

Late in the season, when he judged that the time was ripe, Barr-Saggott developed a plan which did great credit to his administrative powers. He arranged an archery tournament for ladies, with a most sumptuous diamond-studded bracelet as prize. He drew up his terms skilfully, and every one saw that the bracelet was a gift to Miss Beighton; the acceptance carrying with it the hand and the heart of Commissioner Barr-Saggott. The terms were a St. Leonard's Round — thirty-six shots at sixty yards — under the rules of the Simla Toxophilite Society.

All Simla was invited. There were beautifully

## CUPID'S ARROWS

arranged tea-tables under the deodars at Annandale, where the Grand Stand is now; and, alone in its glory, winking in the sun, sat the diamond bracelet in a blue velvet case. Miss Beighton was anxious — almost too anxious — to compete. On the appointed afternoon all Simla rode down to Annandale to witness the Judgment of Paris turned upside down. Kitty rode with young Cubbon, and it was easy to see that the boy was troubled in his mind. He must be held innocent of everything that followed. Kitty was pale and nervous, and looked long at the bracelet. Barr-Saggott was gorgeously dressed, even more nervous than Kitty, and more hideous than ever.

Mrs. Beighton smiled condescendingly, as befitted the mother of a potential Commissioneress, and the shooting began; all the world standing in a semicircle as the ladies came out one after the other.

Nothing is so tedious as an archery competition. They shot, and they shot, and they kept on shooting, till the sun left the valley, and little breezes got up in the deodars, and people waited for Miss Beighton to shoot and win. Cubbon was at one horn of the semicircle round the shooters, and Barr-Saggott at the other. Miss Beighton was last on the list. The scoring had been weak, and the bracelet, with Commissioner Barr-Saggott, was hers to a certainty.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

The Commissioner strung her bow with his own sacred hands. She stepped forward, looked at the bracelet, and her first arrow went true to a hair—full into the heart of the “gold”—counting nine points.

Young Cubbon on the left turned white, and his Devil prompted Barr-Saggott to smile. Now horses used to shy when Barr-Saggott smiled. Kitty saw that smile. She looked to her left-front, gave an almost imperceptible nod to Cubbon, and went on shooting.

I wish I could describe the scene that followed. It was out of the ordinary and most improper. Miss Kitty fitted her arrows with immense deliberation, so that every one might see what she was doing. She was a perfect shot; and her 46-pound bow suited her to a nicety. She pinned the wooden legs of the target with great care four successive times. She pinned the wooden top of the target once, and all the ladies looked at each other. Then she began some fancy shooting at the white, which, if you hit it, counts exactly one point. She put five arrows into the white. It was wonderful archery; but, seeing that her business was to make “golds” and win the bracelet, Barr-Saggott turned a delicate green like young water-grass. Next, she shot over the target twice, then wide to the left twice—always with the same deliberation—while a chilly hush fell over the company, and



## CUPID'S ARROWS

Mrs. Beighton took out her handkerchief. Then Kitty shot at the ground in front of the target, and split several arrows. Then she made a red—or seven points—just to show what she could do if she liked, and she finished up her amazing performance with some more fancy shooting at the target supports. Here is her score as it was pricked off:—

	Gold.	Red.	Blue.	Black.	White.	Total Hits.	Total Score.
Miss Beighton	1	1	0	0	5	7	21

Barr-Saggott looked as if the last few arrow-heads had been driven into his legs instead of the target's, and the deep stillness was broken by a little snubby, mottled, half-grown girl saying in a shrill voice of triumph, "*Then I've won!*"

Mrs. Beighton did her best to bear up; but she wept in the presence of the people. No training could help her through such a disappointment. Kitty unstrung her bow with a vicious jerk, and went back to her place, while Barr-Saggott was trying to pretend that he enjoyed snapping the bracelet on the snubby girl's raw, red wrist. It was an awkward scene—most awkward. Every one tried to depart in a body and leave Kitty to the mercy of her Mamma.

But Cubbon took her away instead, and—the rest isn't worth printing.



## HIS CHANCE IN LIFE

Then a pile of heads he laid —  
Thirty thousands heaped on high —  
All to please the Kafir maid,  
Where the Oxus ripples by.  
Grimly spake Atulla Khan: —  
“Love hath made this thing a Man.”

*Oatta's Story.*

If you go straight away from Levées and Government House Lists, past Trades Balls — far beyond everything and everybody you ever knew in your respectable life — you cross, in time, the Borderline where the last drop of White blood ends and the full tide of Black sets in. It would be easier to talk to a new-made Duchess on the spur of the moment than to the Borderline folk without violating some of their conventions or hurting their feelings. The Black and the White mix very quaintly in their ways. Sometimes the White shows in spurts of fierce, childish pride — which is Pride of Race run crooked — and sometimes the Black in still fiercer abasement and humility, half-heathenish customs and strange, unaccountable impulses to crime. One of these days,

## HIS CHANCE IN LIFE

this people — understand they are far lower than the class whence Derozio, the man who imitated Byron, sprung — will turn out a writer or a poet; and then we shall know how they live and what they feel. In the meantime, any stories about them cannot be absolutely correct in fact or inference.

Miss Vezzis came from across the Borderline to look after some children who belonged to a lady until a regularly ordained nurse could come out. The lady said Miss Vezzis was a bad, dirty nurse and inattentive. It never struck her that Miss Vezzis had her own life to lead and her own affairs to worry over, and that these affairs were the most important things in the world to Miss Vezzis. Very few mistresses admit this sort of reasoning. Miss Vezzis was as black as a boot, and, to our standard of taste, hideously ugly. She wore cotton-print gowns and bulged shoes; and when she lost her temper with the children, she abused them in the language of the Borderline — which is part English, part Portuguese, and part Native. She was not attractive; but she had her pride, and she preferred being called “Miss Vezzis.”

Every Sunday, she dressed herself wonderfully and went to see her Mamma, who lived, for the most part, on an old cane chair in a greasy *tussur*-silk dressing-gown and a big rabbit-warren of a house full of Vezzises, Pereiras, Ribieras, Lisboas, and

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Gonsalveses, and a floating population of loafers; besides fragments of the day's market, garlic, stale incense, clothes thrown on the floor, petticoats hung on strings for screens, old bottles, pewter crucifixes, dried *immortelles*, pariah puppies, plaster images of the Virgin, and hats without crowns. Miss Vezzi drew twenty rupees a month for acting as nurse, and she squabbled weekly with her Mamma as to the percentage to be given towards housekeeping. When the quarrel was over, Michele D'Cruze used to shamble across the low mud wall of the compound and make love to Miss Vezzi after the fashion of the Borderline, which is hedged about with much ceremony. Michele was a poor, sickly weed and very black; but he had his pride. He would not be seen smoking a *buqa* for anything; and he looked down on natives as only a man with seven-eighths native blood in his veins can. The Vezzi Family had their pride too. They traced their descent from a mythical platelayer who had worked on the Sone Bridge when railways were new in India, and they valued their English origin. Michele was a Telegraph Signaller on Rs.35 a month. The fact that he was in Government employ made Mrs. Vezzi lenient to the shortcomings of his ancestors.

There was a compromising legend—Dom Anna the tailor brought it from Poonani—that a black Jew of Cochin had once married into the D'Cruze

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family; while it was an open secret that an uncle of Mrs. D'Cruze was, at that very time, doing menial work, connected with cooking, for a Club in Southern India! He sent Mrs. D'Cruze seven rupees eight annas a month; but she felt the disgrace to the family very keenly all the same.

However, in the course of a few Sundays, Mrs. Vezzi brought herself to overlook these blemishes and gave her consent to the marriage of her daughter with Michele, on condition that Michele should have at least fifty rupees a month to start married life upon. This wonderful prudence must have been a lingering touch of the mythical platelayer's Yorkshire blood; for across the Borderline people take a pride in marrying when they please—not when they can.

Having regard to his departmental prospects, Mrs. Vezzi might as well have asked Michele to go away and come back with the Moon in his pocket. But Michele was deeply in love with Miss Vezzi, and that helped him to endure. He accompanied Miss Vezzi to Mass one Sunday, and after Mass, walking home through the hot stale dust with her hand in his, he swore by several Saints, whose names would not interest you, never to forget Miss Vezzi; and she swore by her Honour and the Saints—the oath runs rather curiously: “*In nomine Sanctissimæ*—” (whatever the name of the she-Saint is) and so forth, ending with a kiss on

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

the forehead, a kiss on the left cheek, and a kiss on the mouth — never to forget Michele.

Next week Michele was transferred, and Miss Vezzi dropped tears upon the window-sash of the “Intermediate” compartment as he left the Station.

If you look at the telegraph-map of India you will see a long line skirting the coast from Backergunge to Madras. Michele was ordered to Tibasu, a little Sub-office one-third down this line, to send messages on from Berhampur to Chicacola, and to think of Miss Vezzi and his chances of getting fifty rupees a month out of office-hours. He had the noise of the Bay of Bengal and a Bengali Babu for company; nothing more. He sent foolish letters, with crosses tucked inside the flaps of the envelopes, to Miss Vezzi.

When he had been at Tibasu for nearly three weeks his chance came.

Never forget that unless the outward and visible signs of Our Authority are always before a native he is as incapable as a child of understanding what authority means, or where is the danger of disobeying it. Tibasu was a forgotten little place with a few Orissa Mahommedans in it. These, hearing nothing of the Collector-*Sabib* for some time and heartily despising the Hindu Sub-Judge, arranged to start a little Mohurram riot of their own. But the Hindus turned out and broke their heads; when, finding lawlessness pleasant, Hindus

## HIS CHANCE IN LIFE

and Mahommedans together raised an aimless sort of Donnybrook just to see how far they could go. They looted each other's shops, and paid off private grudges in the regular way. It was a nasty little riot, but not worth putting in the newspapers.

Michele was working in his office when he heard the sound that a man never forgets all his life — the “*ab-yah*” of an angry crowd. [When that sound drops about three tones, and changes to a thick, droning *ut*, the man who hears it had better go away if he is alone.] The Native Police Inspector ran in and told Michele that the town was in an uproar and coming to wreck the Telegraph Office. The Babu put on his cap and quietly dropped out of the window; while the Police Inspector, afraid, but obeying the old race-instinct which recognises a drop of White blood as far as it can be diluted, said, “What orders does the *Sabib* give?”

The “*Sabib*” decided Michele. Though horribly frightened, he felt that, for the hour, he, the man with the Cochin Jew and the menial uncle in his pedigree, was the only representative of English authority in the place. Then he thought of Miss Vezzis and the fifty rupees, and took the situation on himself. There were seven native policemen in Tibasu, and four crazy smooth-bore muskets among them. All the men were gray with fear,

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but not beyond leading. Michele dropped the key of the telegraph instrument, and went out, at the head of his army, to meet the mob. As the shouting crew came round a corner of the road, he dropped and fired; the men behind him loosing instinctively at the same time.

The whole crowd—curs to the back-bone—yelled and ran; leaving one man dead and another dying in the road. Michele was sweating with fear; but he kept his weakness under, and went down into the town, past the house where the Sub-Judge had barricaded himself. The streets were empty. Tibasu was more frightened than Michele, for the mob had been taken at the right time.

Michele returned to the Telegraph Office, and sent a message to Chicacola asking for help. Before an answer came, he received a deputation of the elders of Tibasu, telling him that the Sub-Judge said his actions generally were “unconstitutional,” and trying to bully him. But the heart of Michele D’Cruze was big and white in his breast, because of his love for Miss Vezzis, the nurse-girl, and because he had tasted for the first time Responsibility and Success. Those two make an intoxicating drink, and have ruined more men than ever has Whisky. Michele answered that the Sub-Judge might say what he pleased, but, until the Assistant Collector came, the Telegraph



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Signaller was the Government of India in Tibasu, and the elders of the town would be held accountable for further rioting. Then they bowed their heads and said, "Show mercy!" or words to that effect, and went back in great fear; each accusing the other of having begun the rioting.

Early in the dawn, after a night's patrol with his seven policemen, Michele went down the road, musket in hand, to meet the Assistant Collector who had ridden in to quell Tibasu. But, in the presence of this young Englishman, Michele felt himself slipping back more and more into the native; and the tale of the Tibasu Riots ended, with the strain on the teller, in an hysterical outburst of tears, bred by sorrow that he had killed a man, shame that he could not feel as uplifted as he had felt through the night, and childish anger that his tongue could not do justice to his great deeds. It was the White drop in Michele's veins dying out, though he did not know it.

But the Englishman understood; and, after he had schooled those men of Tibasu, and had conferred with the Sub-Judge till that excellent official turned green, he found time to draft an official letter describing the conduct of Michele. Which letter filtered through the Proper Channels, and ended in the transfer of Michele up-country once more, on the Imperial salary of sixty-six rupees a month.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

So he and Miss Vezzis were married with great state and ancientry; and now there are several little D'Cruzes sprawling about the verandahs of the Central Telegraph Office.

But, if the whole revenue of the Department he serves were to be his reward, Michele could never, never repeat what he did at Tibasu for the sake of Miss Vezzis the nurse-girl.

Which proves that, when a man does good work out of all proportion to his pay, in seven cases out of nine there is a woman at the back of the virtue.

The two exceptions must have suffered from sunstroke.

## WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

What is in the Brahman's books that is in the Brahman's heart. Neither you nor I knew there was so much evil in the world.

*Hindu Proverb.*

THIS began in a practical joke; but it has gone far enough now, and is getting serious.

Platte, the Subaltern, being poor, had a Waterbury watch and a plain leather guard.

The Colonel had a Waterbury watch also, and, for guard, the lip-strap of a curb-chain. Lip-straps make the best watch-guards. They are strong and short. Between a lip-strap and an ordinary leather guard there is no great difference; between one Waterbury watch and another none at all. Every one in the Station knew the Colonel's lip-strap. He was not a horsey man, but he liked people to believe he had been one once; and he wove fantastic stories of the hunting-bridle to which this particular lip-strap had belonged. Otherwise he was painfully religious.

Platte and the Colonel were dressing at the Club—both late for their engagements, and both in a hurry. That was *kismet*. The two watches were on a shelf below the looking-glass—guards

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

hanging down. That was carelessness. Platte changed first, snatched a watch, looked in the glass, settled his tie, and ran. Forty seconds later, the Colonel did exactly the same thing; each man taking the other's watch.

You may have noticed that many religious people are deeply suspicious. They seem—for purely religious purposes, of course—to know more about iniquity than the Unregenerate. Perhaps they were specially bad before they became converted! At any rate, in the imputation of things evil, and in putting the worst construction on things innocent, a certain type of good people may be trusted to surpass all others. The Colonel and his Wife were of that type. But the Colonel's Wife was the worst. She manufactured the Station scandal, and—talked to her *ayah*. Nothing more need be said. The Colonel's Wife broke up the Laplaces' home. The Colonel's Wife stopped the Ferris-Haughtrey engagement. The Colonel's Wife induced young Buxton to keep his wife down in the Plains through the first year of the marriage. Wherefore little Mrs. Buxton died, and the baby with her. These things will be remembered against the Colonel's Wife so long as there is a regiment in the country.

But to come back to the Colonel and Platte. They went their several ways from the dressing-room. The Colonel dined with two Chaplains,

## WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

while Platte went to a bachelor-party, and whist to follow.

Mark how things happen! If Platte's groom had put the new saddle-pad on the mare, the butts of the territs would not have worked through the worn leather and the old pad into the mare's withers, when she was coming home at two o'clock in the morning. She would not have reared, bolted, fallen into a ditch, upset the cart, and sent Platte flying over an aloe-hedge on to Mrs. Larkyn's well-kept lawn; and this tale would never have been written. But the mare did all these things, and while Platte was rolling over and over on the turf, like a shot rabbit, the watch and guard flew from his waistcoat—as an Infantry Major's sword hops out of the scabbard when they are firing a *feu-de-joie*—and rolled and rolled in the moonlight, till it stopped under a window.

Platte stuffed his handkerchief under the pad, put the cart straight, and went home.

Mark again how *kismet* works! This would not arrive once in a hundred years. Towards the end of his dinner with the two Chaplains, the Colonel let out his waistcoat and leaned over the table to look at some Mission Reports. The bar of the watch-guard worked through the button-hole, and the watch—Platte's watch—slid quietly on to the carpet. Where the bearer found it next morning and kept it.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Then the Colonel went home to the wife of his bosom; but the driver of the carriage was drunk and lost his way. So the Colonel returned at an unseemly hour and his excuses were not accepted. If the Colonel's Wife had been an ordinary vessel of wrath appointed for destruction, she would have known that when a man stays away on purpose, his excuse is always sound and original. The very baldness of the Colonel's explanation proved its truth.

See once more the workings of *kismet*. The Colonel's watch which came with Platte hurriedly on to Mrs. Larkyn's lawn, chose to stop just under Mrs. Larkyn's window, where she saw it early in the morning, recognised it and picked it up. She had heard the crash of Platte's cart at two o'clock that morning, and his voice calling the mare names. She knew Platte and liked him. That day she showed him the watch and heard his story. He put his head on one side, winked and said, "How disgusting! Shocking old man! With his religious training, too! I should send the watch to the Colonel's Wife and ask for explanations."

Mrs. Larkyn thought for a minute of the Laplaces—whom she had known when Laplace and his wife believed in each other—and answered, "I will send it. I think it will do her good. But, remember, we must never tell her the truth."

Platte guessed that his own watch was in the Colonel's possession, and thought that the return

## WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

of the lip-strapped Waterbury with a soothing note from Mrs. Larkyn would merely create a small trouble for a few minutes. Mrs. Larkyn knew better. She knew that any poison dropped would find good holding-ground in the heart of the Colonel's Wife.

The packet, and a note containing a few remarks on the Colonel's calling-hours, were sent over to the Colonel's Wife, who wept in her own room and took counsel with herself.

If there was one woman under Heaven whom the Colonel's Wife hated with holy fervour, it was Mrs. Larkyn. Mrs. Larkyn was a frivolous lady, and called the Colonel's Wife "old cat." The Colonel's Wife said that somebody in Revelation was remarkably like Mrs. Larkyn. She mentioned other Scripture people as well. From the Old Testament. But the Colonel's Wife was the only person who cared or dared to say anything against Mrs. Larkyn. Every one else accepted her as an amusing, honest little body. Wherefore, to believe that her husband had been shedding watches under that "Thing's" window at ungodly hours, coupled with the fact of his late arrival on the previous night, was . . .

At this point she rose up and sought her husband. He denied everything except the ownership of the watch. She besought him, for his Soul's sake, to speak the truth. He denied afresh,



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

with two bad words. Then a stony silence held the Colonel's Wife, while a man could draw his breath five times.

The speech that followed is no affair of mine or yours. It was made up of wifely and womanly jealousy; knowledge of old age and sunk cheeks; deep mistrust born of the text that says even little babies' hearts are as bad as they make them; rancorous hatred of Mrs. Larkyn, and the tenets of the creed of the Colonel's Wife's upbringing.

Over and above all, was the damning lip-strapped Waterbury, ticking away in the palm of her shaking, withered hand, At that hour, I think, the Colonel's Wife realised a little of the restless suspicion she had injected into old Laplace's mind, a little of poor Miss Haughtrey's misery, and some of the canker that ate into Buxton's heart as he watched his wife dying before his eyes. The Colonel stammered and tried to explain. Then he remembered that his watch had disappeared; and the mystery grew greater. The Colonel's Wife talked and prayed by turns till she was tired, and went away to devise means for chastening the stubborn heart of her husband. Which, translated, means, in our slang, "tail-twisting."

Being deeply impressed with the doctrine of Original Sin, she could not believe in the face of appearances. She knew too much, and jumped to the wildest conclusions.

## WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

But it was good for her. It spoilt her life, as she had spoilt the life of the Laplaces. She had lost her faith in the Colonel, and—here the creed-suspicion came in—he might, she argued, have erred many times, before a merciful Providence, at the hands of so unworthy an instrument as Mrs. Larkyn, had established his guilt. He was a bad, wicked, gray-haired profligate. This may sound too sudden a revulsion for a long-wedded wife; but it is a venerable fact that, if a man or woman makes a practice of, and takes a delight in, believing and spreading evil of people indifferent to him or her, he or she will end in believing evil of folk very near and dear. You may think, also, that the mere incident of the watch was too small and trivial to raise this misunderstanding. It is another aged fact that, in life as well as racing, all the worst accidents happen at little ditches and cut-down fences. In the same way, you sometimes see a woman who would have made a Joan of Arc in another century and climate, threshing herself to pieces over all the mean worry of house-keeping. But that is another story.

Her belief only made the Colonel's Wife more wretched, because it insisted so strongly on the villainy of men. Remembering what she had done, it was pleasant to watch her unhappiness, and the penny-farthing attempts she made to hide it from the Station. But the Station knew and

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

laughed heartlessly; for they had heard the story of the watch, with much dramatic gesture, from Mrs. Larkyn's lips.

Once or twice Platte said to Mrs. Larkyn, seeing that the Colonel had not cleared himself, "This thing has gone far enough. I move we tell the Colonel's Wife how it happened." Mrs. Larkyn shut her lips and shook her head, and vowed that the Colonel's Wife must bear her punishment as best she could. Now Mrs. Larkyn was a frivolous woman, in whom none would have suspected deep hate. So Platte took no action, and came to believe gradually, from the Colonel's silence, that the Colonel must have run off the line somewhere that night, and, therefore, preferred to stand sentence on the lesser count of rambling into other people's compounds out of calling-hours. Platte forgot about the watch business after a while, and moved down-country with his regiment. Mrs. Larkyn went home when her husband's tour of Indian service expired. She never forgot.

But Platte was quite right when he said that the joke had gone too far. The mistrust and the tragedy of it — which we outsiders cannot see and do not believe in — are killing the Colonel's Wife, and are making the Colonel wretched. If either of them read this story, they can depend upon its being a fairly true account of the case, and can kiss and make friends.

## WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

Shakespeare alludes to the pleasure of watching an Engineer being shelled by his own Battery. Now this shows that poets should not write about what they do not understand. Any one could have told him that Sappers and Gunners are perfectly different branches of the Service. But, if you correct the sentence, and substitute Gunner for Sapper, the moral comes just the same.

## THE OTHER MAN

When the Earth was sick and the Skies were gray  
And the woods were rotted with rain,  
The Dead Man rode through the autumn day  
To visit his love again.

*Old Ballad.*

FAR back in the "seventies," before they had built any Public-Offices at Simla, and the broad road round Jakko lived in a pigeon-hole in the P. W. D. hovels, her parents made Miss Gaurey marry Colonel Schreiderling. He could not have been much more than thirty-five years her senior; and as he lived on two hundred rupees a month, and had money of his own, he was well off. He belonged to good people, and suffered in the cold weather from lung-complaints. In the hot weather he dangled on the brink of heat-apoplexy; but it never quite killed him.

Understand, I do not blame Schreiderling. He was a good husband according to his lights, and his temper only failed him when he was being nursed. Which was some seventeen days in each month. He was almost generous to his wife about money-matters, and that, for him, was a concession.

## THE OTHER MAN

Still Mrs. Schreiderling was not happy. They married her when she was this side of twenty and had given all her poor little heart to another man. I have forgotten his name, but we will call him the Other Man. He had no money and no prospects. He was not even good-looking; and I think he was in the Commissariat or Transport. But, in spite of all these things, she loved him very badly; and there was some sort of an engagement between the two when Schreiderling appeared and told Mrs. Gaurey that he wished to marry her daughter. Then the other engagement was broken off—washed away by Mrs. Gaurey's tears, for that lady governed her house by weeping over disobedience to her authority and the lack of reverence she received in her old age. The daughter did not take after her mother. She never cried. Not even at the wedding.

The Other Man bore his loss quietly, and was transferred to as bad a station as he could find. Perhaps the climate consoled him. He suffered from intermittent fever, and that may have distracted him from his other trouble. He was weak about the heart also. Both ways. One of the valves was affected, and the fever made it worse. This showed itself later on.

Then many months passed, and Mrs. Schreiderling took to being ill. She did not pine away like people in story-books, but she seemed to pick up

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

every form of illness that went about a Station, from simple fever upwards. She was never more than ordinarily pretty at the best of times; and the illnesses made her ugly. Schreiderling said so. He prided himself on speaking his mind.

When she ceased being pretty, he left her to her own devices, and went back to the lairs of his bachelordom. She used to trot up and down Simla Mall in a forlorn sort of way, with a gray Terai hat well on the back of her head, and a shocking bad saddle under her. Schreiderling's generosity stopped at the horse. He said that any saddle would do for a woman as nervous as Mrs. Schreiderling. She never was asked to dance, because she did not dance well; and she was so dull and uninteresting that her box very seldom had any cards in it. Schreiderling said that if he had known she was going to be such a scarecrow after her marriage, he would never have married her. He always prided himself on speaking his mind, did Schreiderling.

He left her at Simla one August, and went down to his regiment. Then she revived a little, but she never recovered her looks. I found out at the Club that the Other Man was coming up sick — very sick — on an off chance of recovery. The fever and the heart-valves had nearly killed him. She knew that too, and she knew — what I had no interest in knowing — when he was coming up.



## THE OTHER MAN

I suppose he wrote to tell her. They had not seen each other since a month before the wedding. And here comes the unpleasant part of the story.

A late call kept me down at the Dovedell Hotel till dusk one evening. Mrs. Schreiderling had been flitting up and down the Mall all the afternoon in the rain. Coming up along the Cart-road, a tonga passed me, and my pony, tired with standing so long, set off at a canter. Just by the road down to the Tonga Office Mrs. Schreiderling, dripping from head to foot, was waiting for the tonga. I turned uphill, as the tonga was no affair of mine; and just then she began to shriek. I went back at once and saw, under the Tonga Office lamps, Mrs. Schreiderling kneeling in the wet road by the back seat of the newly-arrived tonga, screaming hideously. Then she fell face down in the dirt as I came up.

Sitting in the back seat, very square and firm, with one hand on the awning-stanchion and the wet pouring off his hat and moustache, was the Other Man—dead. The sixty-mile uphill jolt had been too much for his valve, I suppose. The tonga-driver said, "This Sahib died two stages out of Solon. Therefore, I tied him with a rope, lest he should fall out by the way, and so came to Simla. Will the Sahib give me *bukshish*? It," pointing to the Other Man, "should have given one rupee."

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

The Other Man sat with a grin on his face, as if he enjoyed the joke of his arrival; and Mrs. Schreiderling, in the mud, began to groan. There was no one except us four in the office and it was raining heavily. The first thing was to take Mrs. Schreiderling home, and the second was to prevent her name from being mixed up with the affair. The tonga-driver received five rupees to find a bazar 'rickshaw for Mrs. Schreiderling. He was to tell the Tonga Babu afterwards of the Other Man, and the Babu was to make such arrangements as seemed best.

Mrs. Schreiderling was carried into the shed out of the rain, and for three-quarters of an hour we two waited for the 'rickshaw. The Other Man was left exactly as he had arrived. Mrs. Schreiderling would do everything but cry, which might have helped her. She tried to scream as soon as her senses came back, and then she began praying for the Other Man's soul. Had she not been as honest as the day, she would have prayed for her own soul too. I waited to hear her do this, but she did not. Then I tried to get some of the mud off her habit. Lastly, the 'rickshaw came, and I got her away — partly by force. It was a terrible business from beginning to end; but most of all when the 'rickshaw had to squeeze between the wall and the tonga, and she saw by the lamplight that thin, yellow hand grasping the awning-stanchion.

## THE OTHER MAN

She was taken home just as every one was going to a dance at Viceregal Lodge — “Peterhoff” it was then — and the doctor found out that she had fallen from her horse, that I had picked her up at the back of Jakko, and really deserved great credit for the prompt manner in which I had secured medical aid. She did not die — men of Schreiderling’s stamp marry women who don’t die easily. They live and grow ugly.

She never told of her one meeting, since her marriage, with the Other Man; and, when the chill and cough following the exposure of that evening, allowed her abroad, she never by word or sign alluded to having met me by the Tonga Office. Perhaps she never knew.

She used to trot up and down the Mall, on that shocking bad saddle, looking as if she expected to meet some one round the corner every minute. Two years afterwards she went Home, and died — at Bournemouth, I think.

Schreiderling, when he grew maudlin at Mess, used to talk about “my poor dear wife.” He always set great store on speaking his mind, did Schreiderling.

## HAUNTED SUBALTERNS

So long as the "Inextinguishables" confined themselves to running picnics, gymkhanas, flirtations and innocences of that kind, no one said anything. But when they ran ghosts, people put up their eyebrows. 'Man can't feel comfy with a regiment that entertains ghosts on its establishment. It is against General Orders. The "Inextinguishables" said that the ghosts were private and not Regimental property. They referred you to Tesser for particulars; and Tesser told you to go to—the hottest cantonment of all. He said that it was bad enough to have men making hay of his bedding and breaking his banjo-strings when he was out, without being chaffed afterwards; and he would thank you to keep your remarks on ghosts to yourself. This was before the "Inextinguishables" had sworn by their several lady-loves that they were innocent of any intrusion into Tesser's quarters. Then Horrocks mentioned casually at Mess, that a couple of white figures had been bounding about his room the night before, and he did n't approve of it. The "Inextinguishables" denied, energetically, that they had had any hand

## HAUNTED SUBALTERNS

in the manifestations, and advised Horrocks to consult Tesser.

I don't suppose that a Subaltern believes in anything except his chances of a Company ; but Horrocks and Tesser were exceptions. They came to believe in their ghosts. They had reason.

Horrocks used to find himself, at about three o'clock in the morning, staring wide-awake, watching two white Things hopping about his room and jumping up to the ceiling. Horrocks was of a placid turn of mind. After a week or so spent in watching his servants, and lying in wait for strangers, and trying to keep awake all night, he came to the conclusion that he was haunted, and that, consequently, he need not bother. He wasn't going to encourage these ghosts by being frightened of them. Therefore, when he woke—as usual—with a start and saw these Things jumping like kangaroos, he only murmured:—"Go on! Don't mind me!" and went to sleep again.

Tesser said:—"It's all very well for you to make fun of *your* show. You can see your ghosts. Now I can't see mine, and I don't half like it."

Tesser used to come into his room of nights, and find the whole of his bedding neatly stripped, as if it had been done with one sweep of the hand, from the top right-hand corner of the charpoy to the bottom left-hand corner. Also his lamp used to lie weltering on the floor, and generally his pet

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

screw-head, inlaid, nickel-plated banjo was lying on the charpoy, with all its strings broken. Tesser took away the strings, on the occasion of the third manifestation, and the next night a man complimented him on his playing the best music ever got out of a banjo, for half an hour.

“Which half hour?” said Tesser.

“Between nine and ten,” said the man. Tesser had gone out to dinner at 7:30 and had returned at midnight.

He talked to his bearer and threatened him with unspeakable things. The bearer was grey with fear: — “I’m a poor man,” said he. “If the Sahib is haunted by a Devil, what can I do?”

“Who says I’m haunted by a Devil?” howled Tesser, for he was angry.

“I have seen It,” said the bearer, “at night, walking round and round your bed; and that is why everything is *ulta-pulta* in your room. I am a poor man, but I never go into your room alone. The *bbisti* comes with me.”

Tesser was thoroughly savage at this, and he spoke to Horrocks, and the two laid traps to catch that Devil, and threatened their servants with dog-whips if any more “*shaitan-ke-hanky-panky*” took place. But the servants were soaked with fear, and it was no use adding to their tortures. When Tesser went out at night, four of his men, as a rule, slept in the verandah of his quarters, until the

## HAUNTED SUBALTERNS

banjo without the strings struck up, and then they fled.

One day, Tesser had to put in a month at a Fort with a detachment of "Inextinguishables." The Fort might have been Govindghar, Jumrood, or Phillour; but it wasn't. He left Cantonments rejoicing, for his Devil was preying on his mind; and with him went another Subaltern, a junior. But the Devil came too. After Tesser had been in the Fort about ten days he went out to dinner. When he came back he found his Subaltern doing sentry on a banquette across the Fort Ditch, as far removed as might be from the Officers' Quarters.

"What's wrong?" said Tesser.

The Subaltern said, "Listen!" and the two, standing under the stars, heard from the Officers' Quarters, high up in the wall of the Fort, the "*strumty tumty tumty*" of the banjo; which seemed to have an oratorio on hand.

"That performance," said the Subaltern, "has been going on for three mortal hours. I never wished to desert before, but I do now. I say, Tesser, old man, you are the best of good fellows, I'm sure, but . . . I say . . . look here, now, you are quite unfit to live with. 'Tisn't in my Commission, you know, that I'm to serve under a . . . a . . . man with Devils."

"Isn't it?" said Tesser. "If you make an ass



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

of yourself I'll put you under arrest . . . and *in my room!*"

"You can put me where you please, but I'm not going to assist at these infernal concerts. 'Tisn't right. 'Tisn't natural. Look here, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but — try to think now — haven't you done something — committed some — murder that has slipped your memory — or forged something . . . ?"

"Well! For an all-round, double-shotted half-baked fool you are the . . ."

"I dare say I am," said the Subaltern. "But you don't expect me to keep my wits with that row going on, do you?"

The banjo was rattling away as if it had twenty strings. Tesser sent up a stone, and a shower of broken window-pane fell into the Fort Ditch; but the banjo kept on. Tesser hauled the other Subaltern up to the quarters, and found his room in frightful confusion — lamp upset, bedding all over the floor, chairs overturned and table tilted sideways. He took stock of the wreck and said despairing: — "Oh, this *is* lovely!"

The Subaltern was peeping in at the door.

"I'm glad you think so," he said. "'Tisn't lovely enough for me. I *locked up* your room directly after you had gone out. See here, I think you'd better apply for Horrocks to come out in my place. He's troubled with your complaint,

## HAUNTED SUBALTERNS

and this business will make me a jabbering idiot if it goes on."

Tesser went to bed amid the wreckage, very angry, and next morning he rode into Cantonments and asked Horrocks to arrange to relieve "that fool with me now."

"You've got 'em again, have you?" said Horrocks. "So've I. *Three* white figures this time. We'll worry through the entertainment together."

So Horrocks and Tesser settled down in the Fort together, and the "Inextinguishables" said pleasant things about "seven other Devils." Tesser didn't see where the joke came in. His room was thrown upside-down three nights out of the seven. Horrocks was not troubled in any way, so his ghosts must have been purely local ones. Tesser, on the other hand, was personally haunted; for his Devil had moved with him from Cantonments to the Fort. Those two boys spent three parts of their time trying to find out *who* was responsible for the riot in Tesser's rooms. At the end of a fortnight they tried to find out *what* was responsible; and seven days later they gave it up as a bad job. Whatever It was, It refused to be caught; even when Tesser went out of the Fort ostentatiously, and Horrocks lay under Tesser's charpoy with a revolver. The servants were afraid—more afraid than ever—and all the evidence showed that they had been playing no

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

tricks. As Tesser said to Horrocks:—"A haunted Subaltern is a joke, but s'pose this keeps on. Just think what a haunted Colonel would be! And, look here — s'pose I marry! D' you s'pose a girl would live a week with me *and* this Devil?"

"I don't know," said Horrocks. "I haven't married often; but I knew a woman once who lived with her husband when he had D. T. He's dead now and I daresay *she* would marry you if you asked her. She isn't exactly a girl though, but she has a large experience of the *other* devils — the blue variety. She's a Government pensioner now, and you might write, y' know. Personally, if I hadn't suffered from ghosts of my own, I should rather avoid you."

"That's just the point," said Tesser. "This Devil thing will end in getting me *budnamed*, and you know I've lived on lemon-squashes and gone to bed at ten for weeks past."

"'Tisn't that sort of Devil," said Horrocks. "It's either a first-class fraud for which some one ought to be killed or else you've offended one of these Indian Devils. It stands to reason that such a beastly country should be full of fiends of all sorts."

"But why should the creature fix on *me*," said Tesser, "and why won't he show himself and have it out like a — like a Devil?"

They were talking outside the Mess after dark,

## HAUNTED SUBALTERNS

and, even as they spoke, they heard the banjo begin to play in Tesser's room, about twenty yards off.

Horrocks ran to his own quarters for a shot-gun and a revolver, and Tesser and he crept up quietly, the banjo still playing, to Tesser's door.

"Now we've got It!" said Horrocks as he threw the door open and let fly with the twelve-bore; Tesser squibbing off all six barrels into the dark, as hard as he could pull trigger.

The furniture was ruined, and the whole Fort was awake; but that was all. No one had been killed, and the banjo was lying on the dishevelled bed-clothes as usual.

Then Tesser sat down in the verandah, and used language that would have qualified him for the companionship of unlimited Devils. Horrocks said things too; but Tesser said the worst.

When the month in the Fort came to an end, both Horrocks and Tesser were glad. They held a final council of war, but came to no conclusion.

"Seems to me, your best plan would be to make your Devil stretch himself. Go down to Bombay with the time-expired men," said Horrocks. "If he really is a Devil, he'll come in the train with you."

"'Tisn't good enough," said Tesser. "Bombay's no fit place to live in at this time of the year. But I'll put in for Dépôt duty at the Hills." And he did.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Now here the tale rests. The Devil stayed below, and Tesser went up and was free. If I had invented this story, I should have put in a satisfactory ending—explained the manifestations as somebody's practical joke. My business being to keep to facts, I can only say what I have said. The Devil may have been a hoax. If so, it was one of the best ever arranged. If it was not a hoax . . . but you must settle that for yourselves.

## CONSEQUENCES

Rosicrucian subtleties  
In the Orient had rise ;  
Ye may find their teachers still  
Under Jacatâla's Hill.  
Seek ye Bombast Paracelsus,  
Read what Flood the Seeker tells us  
Of the Dominant that runs  
Through the Cycles of the Suns —  
Read my story last, and see  
Luna at her apogee.

THERE are yearly appointments, and two-yearly appointments, and five-yearly appointments at Simla, and there are, or used to be, permanent appointments, whereon you stayed up for the term of your natural life and secured red cheeks and a nice income. Of course, you could descend in the cold weather; for Simla is rather dull then.

Tarrion came from goodness knows where — all away and away in some forsaken part of Central India where they call Pachmari a Sanitarium, and drive behind trotting-bullocks, I believe. He belonged to a regiment; but what he really wanted to do was to escape from his regiment and live in Simla for ever and ever. He had no preference

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for anything in particular, beyond a good horse and a nice partner. He thought he could do everything well; which is a beautiful belief when you hold it with all your heart. He was clever in many ways, and good to look at, and always made people round him comfortable—even in Central India.

So he went up to Simla, and, because he was clever and amusing, he gravitated naturally to Mrs. Hauksbee, who could forgive everything but stupidity. Once he did her great service by changing the date on an invitation-card for a big dance which Mrs. Hauksbee wished to attend, but couldn't because she had quarrelled with the A.-D.-C., who took care, being a mean man, to invite her to a small dance on the 6th instead of the big Ball of the 26th. It was a very clever piece of forgery; and when Mrs. Hauksbee showed the A.-D.-C. her invitation-card, and chaffed him mildly for not better managing his vendettas, he really thought that he had made a mistake; and—which was wise—realised that it was no use to fight with Mrs. Hauksbee. She was grateful to Tarrion and asked what she could do for him. He said simply, "I'm a Freelance up here on leave, on the lookout for what I can loot. I haven't a square inch of interest in all Simla. My name isn't known to any man with an appointment in his gift, and I want an appointment—a



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good, sound one. I believe you can do anything you turn yourself to. Will you help me?" Mrs. Hauksbee thought for a minute, and passed the lash of her riding-whip through her lips, as was her custom when thinking. Then her eyes sparkled and she said, "I will"; and she shook hands on it. Tarrion, having perfect confidence in this great woman, took no further thought of the business at all. Except to wonder what sort of an appointment he would win.

Mrs. Hauksbee began calculating the prices of all the Heads of Departments and Members of Council she knew, and the more she thought the more she laughed, because her heart was in the game and it amused her. Then she took a Civil List and ran over a few of the appointments. There are some beautiful appointments in the Civil List. Eventually, she decided that, though Tarrion was too good for the Political Department, she had better begin by trying to place him there. Her own plans to this end do not matter in the least, for Luck or Fate played into her hands and she had nothing to do but to watch the course of events and take the credit of them.

All Viceroys, when they first come out, pass through the Diplomatic Secrecy craze. It wears off in time; but they all catch it in the beginning, because they are new to the country. The particular Viceroy who was suffering from the com-

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plaint just then — this was a long time ago, before Lord Dufferin ever came from Canada, or Lord Ripon from the bosom of the English Church — had it very badly; and the result was that men who were new to keeping official secrets went about looking unhappy; and the Viceroy plumed himself on the way in which he had instilled notions of reticence into his Staff.

Now, the Supreme Government have a careless custom of committing what they do to printed papers. These papers deal with all sorts of things — from the payment of Rs.200 to a “secret service” native, up to rebukes administered to Vakils and Motamids of Native States, and rather brusque letters to Native Princes, telling them to put their houses in order, to refrain from kidnapping women, or filling offenders with pounded red pepper, and eccentricities of that kind. Of course, these things could never be made public, because Native Princes never err officially, and their States are officially as well administered as Our territories. Also, the private allowances to various queer people are not exactly matters to put into newspapers, though they give quaint reading sometimes. When the Supreme Government is at Simla, these papers are prepared there, and go round to the people who ought to see them in office-boxes or by post. The principle of secrecy was to that Viceroy quite as important as the practice, and he

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held that a benevolent despotism like Ours should never allow even little things, such as appointments of subordinate clerks, to leak out till the proper time. He was always remarkable for his principles.

There was a very important batch of papers in preparation at that time. It had to travel from one end of Simla to the other by hand. It was not put into an official envelope, but a large, square, pale pink one; the matter being in MS. on soft crinkley paper. It was addressed to "The Head Clerk, etc. etc." Now, between "The Head Clerk, etc. etc." and "Mrs. Hauksbee" and a flourish, is no very great difference, if the address be written in a very bad hand, as this was. The orderly who took the envelope was not more of an idiot than most orderlies. He merely forgot where this most unofficial cover was to be delivered, and so asked the first Englishman he met, who happened to be a man riding down to Annandale in a great hurry. The Englishman hardly looked at it, said, "Mrs. Hauksbee," and went on. So did the orderly, because that letter was the last in stock and he wanted to get his work over. There was no book to sign; he thrust the letter into Mrs. Hauksbee's bearer's hands and went off to smoke with a friend. Mrs. Hauksbee was expecting some cut-out pattern things in flimsy paper from a friend. As soon as she got the big

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square packet, therefore, she said, "Oh, the dear creature!" and tore it open with a paper-knife, and all the MS. enclosures tumbled out on the floor.

Mrs. Hauksbee began reading. I have said the batch was rather important. That is quite enough for you to know. It referred to some correspondence, two measures, a peremptory order to a native chief and two dozen other things. Mrs. Hauksbee gasped as she read, for the first glimpse of the naked machinery of the Great Indian Government, stripped of its casings, and lacquer, and paint, and guard-rails, impresses even the most stupid man. And Mrs. Hauksbee was a clever woman. She was a little afraid at first, and felt as if she had taken hold of a lightning-flash by the tail, and did not quite know what to do with it. There were remarks and initials at the side of the papers; and some of the remarks were rather more severe than the papers. The initials belonged to men who are all dead or gone now; but they were great in their day. Mrs. Hauksbee read on and thought calmly as she read. Then the value of her trove struck her, and she cast about for the best method of using it. Then Tarrion dropped in, and they read through all the papers together, and Tarrion, not knowing how she had come by them, vowed that Mrs. Hauksbee was the greatest woman on earth. Which I believe was true or nearly so.

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"The honest course is always the best," said Tarrion after an hour and a half of study and conversation. "All things considered, the Intelligence Branch is about my form. Either that or the Foreign Office. I go to lay siege to the High Gods in their Temples."

He did not seek a little man, or a little big man, or a weak Head of a strong Department, but he called on the biggest and strongest man that the Government owned, and explained that he wanted an appointment at Simla on a good salary. The compound insolence of this amused the Strong Man, and, as he had nothing to do for the moment, he listened to the proposals of the audacious Tarrion. "You have, I presume, some special qualifications, besides the gift of self-assertion, for the claims you put forward?" said the Strong Man. "That, Sir," said Tarrion, "is for you to judge." Then he began, for he had a good memory, quoting a few of the more important notes in the papers—slowly and one by one as a man drops chlorodyne into a glass. When he had reached the peremptory order—and it was a very peremptory order—the Strong Man was troubled. Tarrion wound up—"And I fancy that special knowledge of this kind is at least as valuable for, let us say, a berth in the Foreign Office, as the fact of being the nephew of a distinguished officer's wife." That hit the Strong

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Man hard, for the last appointment to the Foreign Office had been by black favour, and he knew it.

“I’ll see what I can do for you,” said the Strong Man.

“Many thanks,” said Tarrion. Then he left, and the Strong Man departed to see how the appointment was to be blocked.

. . . . .

Followed a pause of eleven days; with thunders and lightnings and much telegraphing. The appointment was not a very important one, carrying only between Rs.500 and Rs.700 a month; but, as the Viceroy said, it was the principle of diplomatic secrecy that had to be maintained, and it was more than likely that a boy so well supplied with special information would be worth translating. So they translated Tarrion. They must have suspected him, though he protested that his information was due to singular talents of his own. Now, much of this story, including the after-history of the missing envelope, you must fill in for yourself, because there are reasons why it cannot be written. If you do not know about things Up Above, you won’t understand how to fill in, and you will say it is impossible.

What the Viceroy said when Tarrion was introduced to him was — “This is the boy who ‘rushed’ the Government of India, is it? Recol-

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lect, Sir, that is not done twice." So he must have known something.

What Tarrion said when he saw his appointment gazetted was — "If Mrs. Hauksbee were twenty years younger, and I her husband, I should be Viceroy of India in fifteen years."

What Mrs. Hauksbee said, when Tarrion thanked her, almost with tears in his eyes, was first — "I told you so!" and next to herself — "What fools men are!"



## THE CONVERSION OF AURELIAN McGOGGIN

Ride with an idle whip, ride with an unused heel,  
But, once in a way, there will come a day  
When the colt must be taught to feel  
The lash that falls, and the curb that galls, and the sting of the  
rowelled steel.

*Life's Handicap.*

THIS is not a tale exactly. It is a Tract; and I am immensely proud of it. Making a Tract is a Feat.

Every man is entitled to his own religious opinions; but no man — least of all a junior — has a right to thrust these down other men's throats. The Government sends out weird Civilians now and again; but McGoggin was the queerest exported for a long time. He was clever — brilliantly clever — but his cleverness worked the wrong way. Instead of keeping to the study of the vernaculars, he had read some books written by a man called Comte, I think, and a man called Spencer. [You will find these books in the Library.] They deal with people's insides from the

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point of view of men who have no stomachs. There was no order against his reading them; but his Mamma should have smacked him. They fermented in his head, and he came out to India with a rarefied religion over and above his work. It was not much of a creed. It only proved that men had no souls, and there was no God and no hereafter, and that you must worry along somehow for the good of Humanity.

One of its minor tenets seemed to be that the one thing more sinful than giving an order was obeying it. At least, that was what McGoggin said; but I suspect he had misread his primers.

I do not say a word against this creed. It was made up in Town where there is nothing but machinery and asphalte and building — all shut in by the fog. Naturally, a man grows to think that there is no one higher than himself, and that the Metropolitan Board of Works made everything. But in India, where you really see humanity — raw, brown, naked humanity — with nothing between it and the blazing sky, and only the used-up, over-handled earth underfoot, the notion somehow dies away, and most folk come back to simpler theories. Life, in India, is not long enough to waste in proving that there is no one in particular at the head of affairs. For this reason. The Deputy is above the Assistant, the Commissioner above the Deputy, the Lieutenant-Governor above

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the Commissioner, and the Viceroy above all four, under the orders of the Secretary of State who is responsible to the Empress. If the Empress be not responsible to her Maker—if there is no Maker for her to be responsible to—the entire system of Our administration must be wrong. Which is manifestly impossible. At Home men are to be excused. They are stalled up a good deal and get intellectually “beany.” When you take a gross, “beany” horse to exercise, he slavers and slobbers over the bit till you can’t see the horns. But the bit is there just the same. Men do not get “beany” in India. The climate and the work are against playing bricks with words.

If McGoggin had kept his creed, with the capital letters and the endings in “isms,” to himself, no one would have cared; but his grandfathers on both sides had been Wesleyan preachers, and the preaching strain came out in his mind. He wanted every one at the Club to see that they had no souls, too, and to help him to eliminate his Creator. As a good many men told him, *he* undoubtedly had no soul, because he was so young, but it did not follow that his seniors were equally undeveloped; and, whether there was another world or not, a man still wanted to read his papers in this. “But that is not the point—that is not the point!” Aurelian used to say. Then men threw sofa-cushions at him and told him to go to any par-

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ticular place he might believe in. They christened him the "Blastoderm,"—he said he came from a family of that name somewhere, in the prehistoric ages,—and by insult and laughter strove to choke him dumb, for he was an unmitigated nuisance at the Club; besides being an offence to the older men. His Deputy Commissioner, who was working on the Frontier when Aurelian was rolling on a bed-quilt, told him that, for a clever boy, Aurelian was a very big idiot. And, if he had gone on with his work, he would have been caught up to the Secretariat in a few years. He was of the type that goes there—all head, no physique and a hundred theories. Not a soul was interested in McGoggin's soul. He might have had two, or none, or somebody else's. His business was to obey orders and keep abreast of his files, instead of devastating the Club with "isms."

He worked brilliantly; but he could not accept any order without trying to better it. That was the fault of his creed. It made men too responsible and left too much to their honour. You can sometimes ride an old horse in a halter; but never a colt. McGoggin took more trouble over his cases than any of the men of his year. He may have fancied that thirty-page judgments on fifty-rupee cases—both sides perjured to the gullet—advanced the cause of Humanity. At any rate, he worked too much, and worried and fretted over

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

the rebukes he received, and lectured away on his ridiculous creed out of office, till the Doctor had to warn him that he was overdoing it. No man can toil eighteen annas in the rupee in June without suffering. But McGoggin was still intellectually "beany" and proud of himself and his powers, and he would take no hint. He worked nine hours a day steadily.

"Very well," said the Doctor, "you'll break down, because you are over-engined for your beam." McGoggin was a little man.

One day, the collapse came — as dramatically as if it had been meant to embellish a Tract.

It was just before the Rains. We were sitting in the verandah, in the dead, hot, close air, gasping and praying that the black-blue clouds would let down and bring the cool. Very, very far away, there was a faint whisper, which was the roar of the Rains breaking over the river. One of the men heard it, got out of his chair, listened and said, naturally enough, "Thank God!"

Then the Blastoderm turned in his place and said, "Why? I assure you it's only the result of perfectly natural causes — atmospheric phenomena of the simplest kind. Why you should, therefore, return thanks to a Being who never did exist — who is only a figment —"

"Blastoderm," grunted the man in the next chair, "dry up, and throw me over the 'Pioneer.'"

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We know all about your figments." The Blastoderm reached out to the table, took up one paper, and jumped as if something had stung him. Then he handed the paper.

"As I was saying," he went on slowly and with an effort—"due to perfectly natural causes—perfectly natural causes. I mean——"

"Hi! Blastoderm, you've given me the 'Calcutta Mercantile Advertiser.'"

The dust got up in little whorls, while the tree-tops rocked and the kites whistled. But no one was looking at the coming of the Rains. We were all staring at the Blastoderm, who had risen from his chair and was fighting with his speech. Then he said, still more slowly—

"Perfectly conceivable——dictionary——red oak——amenable——cause——retaining——shuttlecock——alone."

"Blastoderm's drunk," said one man. But the Blastoderm was not drunk. He looked at us in a dazed sort of way, and began motioning with his hands in the half light as the clouds closed overhead. Then—with a scream—

"What is it?——Can't——reserve——attainable——market——obscure——"

But his speech seemed to freeze in him, and—just as the lightning shot two tongues that cut the whole sky into three pieces and the rain fell in quivering sheets—the Blastoderm was struck

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dumb. He stood pawing and champing like a hard-held horse, and his eyes were full of terror.

The Doctor came over in three minutes, and heard the story. "It's *aphasia*," he said. "Take him to his room. I knew the smash would come." We carried the Blastoderm across in the pouring rain to his quarters, and the Doctor gave him bromide of potassium to make him sleep.

Then the Doctor came back to us and told us that *aphasia* was like all the arrears of "Punjab Head" falling in a lump; and that only once before—in the case of a sepoy—had he met with so complete a case. I have seen mild *aphasia* in an overworked man, but this sudden dumbness was uncanny—though, as the Blastoderm himself might have said, due to "perfectly natural causes."

"He'll have to take leave after this," said the Doctor. "He won't be fit for work for another three months. No; it isn't insanity or anything like it. It's only complete loss of control over the speech and memory. I fancy it will keep the Blastoderm quiet, though."

Two days later, the Blastoderm found his tongue again. The first question he asked was—"What was it?" The Doctor enlightened him. "But I can't understand it!" said the Blastoderm. "I'm quite sane; but I can't be sure of my mind, it seems—my *own* memory—can I?"



## THE CONVERSION OF MCGOGGIN

“Go up into the Hills for three months, and don’t think about it,” said the Doctor.

“But I can’t understand it,” repeated the Blastoderm. “It was my *own* mind and memory.”

“I can’t help it,” said the Doctor; “there are a good many things you can’t understand; and, by the time you have put in my length of service, you’ll know exactly how much a man dare call his own in this world.”

The stroke cowed the Blastoderm. He could not understand it. He went into the Hills in fear and trembling, wondering whether he would be permitted to reach the end of any sentence he began.

This gave him a wholesome feeling of mistrust. The legitimate explanation, that he had been overworking himself, failed to satisfy him. Something had wiped his lips of speech, as a mother wipes the milky lips of her child, and he was afraid — horribly afraid.

So the Club had rest when he returned; and if ever you come across Aurelian McGoggin laying down the law on things Human—he doesn’t seem to know as much as he used to about things Divine—put your forefinger to your lip for a moment, and see what happens.

Don’t blame me if he throws a glass at your head.

## A GERM-DESTROYER

Pleasant it is for the Little Tin Gods  
When great Jove nods ;  
But Little Tin Gods make their little mistakes  
In missing the hour when great Jove wakes.

As a general rule, it is inexpedient to meddle with questions of State in a land where men are highly paid to work them out for you. This tale is a justifiable exception.

Once in every five years, as you know, we indent for a new Viceroy; and each Viceroy imports, with the rest of his baggage, a Private Secretary, who may or may not be the real Viceroy, just as Fate ordains. Fate looks after the Indian Empire because it is so big and so helpless.

There was a Viceroy once, who brought out with him a turbulent Private Secretary — a hard man with a soft manner and a morbid passion for work. This Secretary was called Wonder — John Fennil Wonder. The Viceroy possessed no name — nothing but a string of counties and two-thirds of the alphabet after them. He said, in confidence, that he was the electro-plated figure-head of a

## A GERM-DESTROYER

golden administration, and he watched in a dreamy, amused way Wonder's attempts to draw matters which were entirely outside his province into his own hands. "When we are all cherubims together," said His Excellency once, "my dear, good friend Wonder will head the conspiracy for plucking out Gabriel's tail-feathers or stealing Peter's keys. *Then* I shall report him."

But, though the Viceroy did nothing to check Wonder's officiousness, other people said unpleasant things. May be the Members of Council began it; but finally all Simla agreed that there was "too much Wonder and too little Viceroy" in that rule. Wonder was always quoting "His Excellency." It was "His Excellency this," "His Excellency that," "In the opinion of His Excellency," and so on. The Viceroy smiled; but he did not heed. He said that, so long as his old men squabbled with his "dear, good Wonder," they might be induced to leave the Immemorial East in peace.

"No wise man has a Policy," said the Viceroy. "A Policy is the blackmail levied on the Fool by the Unforeseen. I am not the former, and I do not believe in the latter."

I do not quite see what this means, unless it refers to an Insurance Policy. Perhaps it was the Viceroy's way of saying, "Lie low."

That season came up to Simla one of these

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crazy people with only a single idea. These are the men who make things move; but they are not nice to talk to. This man's name was Mellish, and he had lived for fifteen years on land of his own, in Lower Bengal, studying cholera. He held that cholera was a germ that propagated itself as it flew through a muggy atmosphere; and stuck in the branches of trees like a wool-flake. The germ could be rendered sterile, he said, by "Mellish's Own Invincible Fumigatory"—a heavy violet-black powder—"the result of fifteen years' scientific investigation, Sir!"

Inventors seem very much alike as a caste. They talk loudly, especially about "conspiracies of monopolists;" they beat upon the table with their fists; and they secrete fragments of their inventions about their persons.

Mellish said that there was a Medical "Ring" at Simla, headed by the Surgeon-General, who was in league, apparently, with all the Hospital Assistants in the Empire. I forget exactly how he proved it, but it had something to do with "skulking up to the Hills;" and what Mellish wanted was the independent evidence of the Viceroy—"Steward of our Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, Sir." So Mellish went up to Simla, with eighty-four pounds of Fumigatory in his trunk, to speak to the Viceroy and to show him the merits of the invention.

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But it is easier to see a Viceroy than to talk to him, unless you chance to be as important as Mellishe of Madras. He was a six-thousand-rupee man, so great that his daughters never "married." They "contracted alliances." He himself was not paid. He "received emoluments," and his journeys about the country were "tours of observation." His business was to stir up the people in Madras with a long pole — as you stir up tench in a pond — and the people had to come up out of their comfortable old ways and gasp — "This is Enlightenment and Progress. Isn't it fine!" Then they gave Mellishe statues and jasmine garlands, in the hope of getting rid of him.

Mellishe came up to Simla "to confer with the Viceroy." That was one of his perquisites. The Viceroy knew nothing of Mellishe except that he was "one of those middle-class deities who seem necessary to the spiritual comfort of this Paradise of the Middle-classes," and that, in all probability, he had "suggested, designed, founded, and endowed all the public institutions in Madras." Which proves that His Excellency, though dreamy, had experience of the ways of six-thousand-rupee men.

Mellishe's name was E. Mellishe, and Mellish's was E. S. Mellish, and they were both staying at the same hotel, and the Fate that looks after the Indian Empire ordained that Wonder should

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blunder and drop the final “e”; that the Chaprassi should help him, and that the note which ran —

DEAR MR. MELLISH,— Can you set aside your other engagements, and lunch with us at two to-morrow? His Excellency has an hour at your disposal then,

should be given to Mellish with the Fumigatory. He nearly wept with pride and delight, and at the appointed hour cantered to Peterhoff, a big paper-bag full of the Fumigatory in his coat-tail pocket. He had his chance, and he meant to make the most of it. Mellishe of Madras had been so portentously solemn about his “conference,” that Wonder had arranged for a private tiffin,—no A.-D.-C.’s, no Wonder, no one but the Viceroy, who said plaintively that he feared being left alone with unmuzzled autocrats like the great Mellishe of Madras.

But his guest did not bore the Viceroy. On the contrary, he amused him. Mellish was nervously anxious to go straight to his Fumigatory, and talked at random until tiffin was over and His Excellency asked him to smoke. The Viceroy was pleased with Mellish because he did not talk “shop.”

As soon as the cheroots were lit, Mellish spoke like a man; beginning with his cholera-theory, reviewing his fifteen years’ “scientific labours,” the machinations of the “Simla Ring,” and the

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excellence of his Fumigatory, while the Viceroy watched him between half-shut eyes and thought—"Evidently this is the wrong tiger; but it is an original animal." Mellish's hair was standing on end with excitement, and he stammered. He began groping in his coat-tails, and, before the Viceroy knew what was about to happen, he had tipped a bagful of his powder into the big silver ash-tray.

"J-j-judge for yourself, Sir," said Mellish. "Y' Excellency shall judge for yourself! Absolutely infallible, on my honour."

He plunged the lighted end of his cigar into the powder, which began to smoke like a volcano, and send up fat, greasy wreaths of copper-coloured smoke. In five seconds the room was filled with a most pungent and sickening stench—a reek that took fierce hold of the trap of your windpipe and shut it. The powder hissed and fizzed, and sent out blue and green sparks, and the smoke rose till you could neither see, nor breathe, nor gasp. Mellish, however, was used to it.

"Nitrate of strontia," he shouted; "baryta, bone-meal, *etcetera*! Thousand cubic feet smoke per cubic inch. Not a germ could live—not a germ, Y' Excellency!"

But His Excellency had fled, and was coughing at the foot of the stairs, while all Peterhoff hummed like a hive. Red lancers came in, and the head



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Chaprassi, who speaks English, came in, and mace-bearers came in, and ladies ran downstairs screaming, "Fire;" for the smoke was drifting through the house and oozing out of the windows, and bellying along the verandahs, and wreathing and writhing across the gardens. No one could enter the room where Mellish was lecturing on his Fumigatory, till that unspeakable powder had burned itself out.

Then an Aide-de-Camp, who desired the V. C., rushed through the rolling clouds and hauled Mellish into the hall. The Viceroy was prostrate with laughter, and could only waggle his hands feebly at Mellish, who was shaking a fresh bagful of powder at him.

"Glorious! Glorious!" sobbed His Excellency. "Not a germ, as you justly observe, could exist! I can swear it. A magnificent success!"

Then he laughed till the tears came, and Wonder, who had caught the real Mellishe snorting on the Mall, entered and was deeply shocked at the scene. But the Viceroy was delighted, because he saw that Wonder would presently depart. Mellish with the Fumigatory was also pleased, for he felt that he had smashed the Simla Medical "Ring."

. . . . .

Few men could tell a story like His Excellency when he took the trouble, and his account of "my dear, good Wonder's friend with the powder"

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went the round of Simla, and flippant folk made Wonder unhappy by their remarks.

But His Excellency told the tale once too often — for Wonder. As he meant to do. It was at a Seepee Picnic. Wonder was sitting just behind the Viceroy.

“And I really thought for a moment,” wound up His Excellency, “that my dear, good Wonder had hired an assassin to clear his way to the throne!”

Every one laughed; but there was a delicate sub-tinkle in the Viceroy’s tone which Wonder understood. He found that his health was giving way; and the Viceroy allowed him to go, and presented him with a flaming “character” for use at Home among big people.

“My fault entirely,” said His Excellency, in after seasons, with a twinkle in his eye. “My inconsistency must always have been distasteful to such a masterly man.”

## KIDNAPPED

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken any way you please, is bad,  
And strands them in forsaken guts and creeks  
No decent soul would think of visiting.  
You cannot stop the tide ; but, now and then,  
You may arrest some rash adventurer  
Who — h'm — will hardly thank you for your pains.  
*Vibart's Moralities.*

WE are a high-caste and enlightened race, and infant-marriage is very shocking and the consequences are sometimes peculiar ; but, nevertheless, the Hindu notion — which is the Continental notion, which is the aboriginal notion — of arranging marriages irrespective of the personal inclinations of the married, is sound. Think for a minute, and you will see that it must be so ; unless, of course, you believe in “affinities.” In which case you had better not read this tale. How can a man who has never married ; who cannot be trusted to pick up at sight a moderately sound horse ; whose head is hot and upset with visions of domestic felicity, go about the choosing of a wife ? He cannot see straight or think straight if he tries ; and the same disadvan-

## KIDNAPPED

rages exist in the case of a girl's fancies. But when mature, married, and discreet people arrange a match between a boy and a girl, they do it sensibly, with a view to the future, and the young couple live happily ever afterwards. As everybody knows.

Properly speaking, Government should establish a Matrimonial Department, efficiently officered, with a Jury of Matrons, a Judge of the Chief Court, a Senior Chaplain, and an Awful Warning, in the shape of a love-match that has gone wrong, chained to the trees in the courtyard. All marriages should be made through the Department, which might be subordinate to the Educational Department, under the same penalty as that attaching to the transfer of land without a stamped document. But Government won't take suggestions. It pretends that it is too busy. However, I will put my notion on record, and explain the example that illustrates the theory.

Once upon a time, there was a good young man—a first-class officer in his own Department—a man with a career before him and, possibly, a K.C.I.E. at the end of it. All his superiors spoke well of him, because he knew how to hold his tongue and his pen at the proper times. There are, to-day, only eleven men in India who possess this secret; and they have all, with one exception, attained great honour and enormous incomes.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

This good young man was quiet and self-contained—too old for his years by far. Which always carries its own punishment. Had a Subaltern, or a Tea-Planter's Assistant, or anybody who enjoys life and has no care for to-morrow, done what he tried to do, not a soul would have cared. But when Peythroppe—the estimable, virtuous, economical, quiet, hard-working young Peythroppe—fell, there was a flutter through five Departments.

The manner of his fall was in this way. He met a Miss Castries—d'Castries it was originally, but the family dropped the d' for administrative reasons—and he fell in love with her even more energetically than he worked. Understand clearly that there was not a breath of a word to be said against Miss Castries—not a shadow of a breath. She was good and very lovely—possessed what innocent people at Home call a "Spanish" complexion, with thick blue-black hair growing low down on the forehead, into a "widow's peak," and big violet eyes under eyebrows as black and as straight as the borders of a "Gazette Extraordinary" when a big man dies. But—but—but—Well, she was a *very* sweet girl and very pious, but for many reasons she was "impossible." Quite so. All good Mammias know what "impossible" means. It was obviously absurd that Peythroppe should marry her. The little opal-tinted onyx at

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the base of her finger-nails said this as plainly as print. Further, marriage with Miss Castries meant marriage with several other Castries — Honorary Lieutenant Castries her Papa, Mrs. Eulalie Castries her Mamma, and all the ramifications of the Castries family, on incomes ranging from Rs.175 to Rs.470 a month, and *their* wives and connections again.

It would have been cheaper for Peythroppe to have assaulted a Commissioner with a dog-whip, or to have burned the records of a Deputy-Commissioner's Office, than to have contracted an alliance with the Castries. It would have weighted his after-career less — even under a Government which never forgets and *never* forgives. Everybody saw this but Peythroppe. He was going to marry Miss Castries, he was — being of age and drawing a good income — and woe betide the house that would not afterwards receive Mrs. Virginie Saulez Peythroppe with the deference due to her husband's rank. That was Peythroppe's ultimatum, and any remonstrance drove him frantic.

These sudden madresses most afflict the sanest men. There was a case once — but I will tell you of that later on. You cannot account for the mania except under a theory directly contradicting the one about the Place wherein marriages are made. Peythroppe was burningly anxious to put a millstone round his neck at the outset of his career;

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and argument had not the least effect on him. He was going to marry Miss Castries, and the business was his own business. He would thank you to keep your advice to yourself. With a man in this condition, mere words only fix him in his purpose. Of course he cannot see that marriage in India does not concern the individual, but the Government he serves.

Do you remember Mrs. Hauksbee — the most wonderful woman in India? She saved Pluffles from Mrs. Reiver, won Tarrion his appointment in the Foreign Office, and was defeated in open field by Mrs. Cusack-Bremmil. She heard of the lamentable condition of Peythroppe, and her brain struck out the plan that saved him. She had the wisdom of the Serpent, the logical coherence of the Man, the fearlessness of the Child, and the triple intuition of the Woman. Never — no, never — as long as a tonga buckets down the Solon dip, or the couples go a-riding at the back of Summer Hill, will there be such a genius as Mrs. Hauksbee. She attended the consultation of Three Men on Peythroppe's case; and she stood up with the lash of her riding-whip between her lips and spake.

. . . . .

Three weeks later, Peythroppe dined with the Three Men, and the "Gazette of India" came in. Peythroppe found to his surprise that he had been



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gazetted a month's leave. Don't ask me how this was managed. I believe firmly that, if Mrs. Hauksbee gave the order, the whole Great Indian Administration would stand on its head. The Three Men had also a month's leave each. Peythroppe put the "Gazette" down and said bad words. Then there came from the compound the soft "pad-pad" of camels—"thieves' camels," the Bikaneer breed that don't bubble and howl when they sit down and get up.

After that, I don't know what happened. This much is certain. Peythroppe disappeared—vanished like smoke—and the long foot-rest chair in the house of the Three Men was broken to splinters. Also a bedstead departed from one of the bedrooms.

Mrs. Hauksbee said that Mr. Peythroppe was shooting in Rajputana with the Three Men; so we were compelled to believe her.

At the end of the month, Peythroppe was gazetted twenty days' extension of leave; but there was wrath and lamentation in the house of Castries. The marriage-day had been fixed, but the bridegroom never came: and the D'Silvas, Pereiras, and Ducketts lifted their voices and mocked Honorary Lieutenant Castries as one who had been basely imposed upon. Mrs. Hauksbee went to the wedding, and was much astonished when Peythroppe did not appear. After seven weeks,

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Peythroppe and the Three Men returned from Rajputana. Peythroppe was in hard, tough condition, rather white, and more self-contained than ever.

One of the Three Men had a cut on his nose, caused by the kick of a gun. Twelve-bores kick rather curiously.

Then came Honorary Lieutenant Castries, seeking for the blood of his perfidious son-in-law to be. He said things — vulgar and “impossible” things which showed the raw, rough “ranker” below the “Honorary,” and I fancy Peythroppe’s eyes were opened. Anyhow, he held his peace till the end; when he spoke briefly. Honorary Lieutenant Castries asked for a “peg” before he went away to die or bring a suit for breach of promise.

Miss Castries was a *very* good girl. She said that she would have no breach of promise suits. She said that, if she was not a lady, she was refined enough to know that ladies kept their broken hearts to themselves; and, as she ruled her parents, nothing happened. Later on, she married a most respectable and gentlemanly person. He travelled for an enterprising firm in Calcutta, and was all that a good husband should be.

So Peythroppe came to his right mind again, and did much good work, and was honoured by all who knew him. One of these days he will marry; but he will marry a sweet pink-and-white

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maiden, on the Government House List, with a little money and some influential connections, as every wise man should. And he will never, all his life, tell her what happened during the seven weeks of his shooting-tour in Rajputana.

But just think how much trouble and expense — for camel-hire is not cheap, and those Bikaner brutes had to be fed like humans — might have been saved by a properly conducted Matrimonial Department, under the control of the Director-General of Education, but corresponding direct with the Viceroy.

## THE ARREST OF LIEUTENANT GOLIGHTLY

“I’ve forgotten the countersign,” sez ‘e.

“Oh! You ‘ave, ‘ave you?” sez I.

“But I’m the Colonel,” sez ‘e.

“Oh! You are, are you?” sez I. “Colonel or no Colonel, you waits ‘ere till I’m relieved, an’ the Sarjint reports on your ugly old mug. *Cboop!*” sez I.

An’ s’elp me soul, ‘twas the Colonel after all! But I was a recruity then.

*The Unedited Autobiography of Private Ortheris.*

IF there was one thing on which Golightly prided himself more than another, it was looking like “an Officer and a Gentleman.” He said it was for the honour of the Service that he attired himself so elaborately; but those who knew him best said that it was just personal vanity. There was no harm about Golightly—not an ounce. He recognised a horse when he saw one, and could do more than fill a cantle. He played a very fair game at billiards, and was a sound man at the whist-table. Every one liked him; and nobody ever dreamed of seeing him handcuffed on a sta-

## THE ARREST OF LIEUT. GOLIGHTLY

tion platform as a deserter. But this sad thing happened.

He was going down from Dalhousie, at the end of his leave—riding down. He had run his leave as fine as he dared, and wanted to come down in a hurry.

It was fairly warm at Dalhousie, and, knowing what to expect below, he descended in a new *kbaki* suit—tight fitting—of a delicate olive-green; a peacock-blue tie, white collar, and a snowy white *solah* helmet. He prided himself on looking neat even when he was riding post. He did look neat, and he was so deeply concerned about his appearance before he started that he quite forgot to take anything but some small change with him. He left all his notes at the hotel. His servants had gone down the road before him, to be ready in waiting at Pathankote with a change of gear. That was what he called travelling in “light marching-order.” He was proud of his faculty of organisation—what we call *bundobust*.

Twenty-two miles out of Dalhousie it began to rain—not a mere hill-shower, but a good, tepid, monsoonish downpour. Golightly bustled on, wishing that he had brought an umbrella. The dust on the roads turned into mud, and the pony mired a good deal. So did Golightly’s *kbaki* gaiters. But he kept on steadily and tried to think how pleasant the coolth was.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

His next pony was rather a brute at starting, and, Golightly's hands being slippery with the rain, contrived to get rid of Golightly at a corner. He chased the animal, caught it, and went ahead briskly. The spill had not improved his clothes or his temper, and he had lost one spur. He kept the other one employed. By the time that stage was ended, the pony had had as much exercise as he wanted, and, in spite of the rain, Golightly was sweating freely. At the end of another miserable half hour Golightly found the world disappear before his eyes in clammy pulp. The rain had turned the pith of his huge and snowy *solab-topee* into an evil-smelling dough, and it had closed on his head like a half-opened mushroom. Also the green lining was beginning to run.

Golightly did not say anything worth recording here. He tore off and squeezed up as much of the brim as was in his eyes, and ploughed on. The back of the helmet was flapping on his neck and the sides stuck to his ears, but the leather band and green lining kept things roughly together, so that the hat did not actually melt away where it flapped.

Presently, the pulp and the green stuff made a sort of slimy mildew which ran over Golightly in several directions — down his back and bosom for choice. The *kbaki* colour ran too — it was really shockingly bad dye — and sections of Golightly were brown, and patches were violet, and con-

## THE ARREST OF LIEUT. GOLIGHTLY

tours were ochre, and streaks were ruddy-red, and blotches were nearly white, according to the nature and peculiarities of the dye. When he took out his handkerchief to wipe his face, and the green of the hat-lining and the purple stuff that had soaked through on to his neck from the tie became thoroughly mixed, the effect was amazing.

Near Dhar the rain stopped and the evening sun came out and dried him up slightly. It fixed the colours, too. Three miles from Pathankote the last pony fell dead lame, and Golightly was forced to walk. He pushed on into Pathankote to find his servants. He did not know then that his *khitmatgar* had stopped by the roadside to get drunk, and would come on the next day saying that he had sprained his ankle. When he got into Pathankote he couldn't find his servants, his boots were stiff and ropy with mud, and there were large quantities of dust about his body. The blue tie had run as much as the *khaki*. So he took it off with the collar and threw it away. Then he said something about servants generally and tried to get a peg. He paid eight annas for the drink, and this revealed to him that he had only six annas more in his pocket—or in the world as he stood at that hour.

He went to the Station-Master to negotiate for a first-class ticket to Khasa, where he was stationed. The booking-clerk said something to the Station-



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Master, the Station-Master said something to the telegraph clerk, and the three looked at him with curiosity. They asked him to wait for half an hour, while they telegraphed to Umritsar for authority. So he waited, and four constables came and grouped themselves picturesquely round him. Just as he was preparing to ask them to go away, the Station-Master said that he would give the Sahib a ticket to Umritsar, if the Sahib would kindly come inside the booking-office. Golightly stepped inside, and the next thing he knew was that a constable was attached to each of his legs and arms, while the Station-Master was trying to cram a mail-bag over his head.

There was a very fair scuffle all round the booking-office, and Golightly took a nasty cut over his eye through falling against a table. But the constables were too much for him, and they and the Station-Master handcuffed him securely. As soon as the mail-bag was slipped, he began expressing his opinions, and the head constable said, "Without doubt this is the soldier-Englishman we required. Listen to the abuse!" Then Golightly asked the Station-Master what the this and the that the proceedings meant. The Station-Master told him he was "Private John Binkle of the —— Regiment, 5 ft. 9 in., fair hair, gray eyes, and a dissipated appearance, no marks on the body,"

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who had deserted a fortnight ago. Golightly began explaining at great length; and the more he explained the less the Station-Master believed him. He said that no Lieutenant could look such a ruffian as did Golightly, and that his instructions were to send his capture under proper escort to Umritsar. Golightly was feeling very damp and uncomfortable, and the language he used was not fit for publication, even in an expurgated form. The four constables saw him safe to Umritsar in an "intermediate" compartment, and he spent the four-hour journey in abusing them as fluently as his knowledge of the vernaculars allowed.

At Umritsar he was bundled out on the platform into the arms of a Corporal and two men of the ——— Regiment. Golightly drew himself up and tried to carry off matters jauntily. He did not feel too jaunty in handcuffs, with four constables behind him, and the blood from the cut on his forehead stiffening on his left cheek. The Corporal was not jocular either. Golightly got as far as—"This is a very absurd mistake, my men," when the Corporal told him to "stow his lip" and come along. Golightly did not want to come along. He desired to stop and explain. He explained very well indeed, until the Corporal cut in with—"You a orficer! It's the like o' *you* as brings disgrace on the likes of *us*. Bloomin' fine

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officer you are! I know your regiment. The Rogue's March is the quickstep where you come from. You're a black shame to the Service."

Golightly kept his temper, and began explaining all over again from the beginning. Then he was marched out of the rain into the refreshment-room, and told not to make a qualified fool of himself. The men were going to run him up to Fort Govindghar. And "running up" is a performance almost as undignified as the Frog March.

Golightly was nearly hysterical with rage and the chill and the mistake and the handcuffs and the headache that the cut on his forehead had given him. He really laid himself out to express what was in his mind. When he had quite finished and his throat was feeling dry, one of the men said, "I've 'eard a few beggars in the clink blind, stiff and crack on a bit; but I've never 'eard any one to touch this 'ere 'orficer.'" They were not angry with him. They rather admired him. They had some beer at the refreshment-room, and offered Golightly some too, because he had "swore wonderful." They asked him to tell them all about the adventures of Private John Binkle while he was loose on the country-side; and that made Golightly wilder than ever. If he had kept his wits about him he would have been quiet until an officer came; but he attempted to run.

Now the butt of a Martini in the small of your

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back hurts a great deal, and rotten, rain-soaked *khaki* tears easily when two men are yerking at your collar.

Golightly rose from the floor feeling very sick and giddy, with his shirt ripped open all down his breast and nearly all down his back. He yielded to his luck, and at that point the down-train from Lahore came in, carrying one of Golightly's Majors.

This is the Major's evidence in full—

“ There was the sound of a scuffle in the second-class refreshment-room, so I went in and saw the most villainous loafer that I ever set eyes on. His boots and breeches were plastered with mud and beer-stains. He wore a muddy-white dunghill sort of thing on his head, and it hung down in slips on his shoulders, which were a good deal scratched. He was half in and half out of a shirt as nearly in two pieces as it could be, and he was begging the guard to look at the name on the tail of it. As he had rucked the shirt all over his head, I couldn't at first see who he was, but I fancied that he was a man in the first stage of D. T. from the way he swore while he wrestled with his rags. When he turned round, and I had made allowances for a lump as big as a pork-pie over one eye, and some green war-paint on the face, and some violet stripes round the neck, I saw that it was Golightly. He was very glad to see me,” said the Major, “and

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he hoped I would not tell the Mess about it. I didn't, but you can, if you like, now that Golightly has gone home."

Golightly spent the greater part of that summer in trying to get the Corporal and the two soldiers tried by Court-Martial for arresting "an Officer and a Gentleman." They were, of course, very sorry for their error. But the tale leaked into the regimental canteen, and thence ran about the Province.

## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

A stone's throw out on either hand  
From that well-ordered road we tread,  
And all the world is wild and strange :  
*Churel* and ghoul and *Djinn* and sprite  
Shall bear us company to-night,  
For we have reached the Oldest Land  
Wherein the powers of Darkness range.

*From the Dusk to the Dawn.*

THE house of Suddhoo, near the Taksali Gate, is two-storied, with four carved windows of old brown wood, and a flat roof. You may recognize it by five red hand-prints arranged like the Five of Diamonds on the whitewash between the upper windows. Bhagwan Dass the grocer and a man who says he gets his living by seal-cutting live in the lower story with a troop of wives, servants, friends, and retainers. The two upper rooms used to be occupied by Janoo and Azizun and a little black-and-tan terrier that was stolen from an Englishman's house and given to Janoo by a soldier. To-day, only Janoo lives in the upper rooms. Suddhoo sleeps on the roof generally, except when he sleeps in the street. He used to go to Pesh-

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

war in the cold weather to visit his son who sells curiosities near the Edwardes' Gate, and then he slept under a real mud roof. Suddhoo is a great friend of mine, because his cousin had a son who secured, thanks to my recommendation, the post of head-messenger to a big firm in the Station. Suddhoo says that God will make me a Lieutenant-Governor one of these days. I daresay his prophecy will come true. He is very, very old, with white hair and no teeth worth showing, and he has outlived his wits — outlived nearly everything except his fondness for his son at Peshawar. Janoo and Azizun are Kashmiris, Ladies of the City, and theirs was an ancient and more or less honourable profession; but Azizun has since married a medical student from the North-West and has settled down to a most respectable life somewhere near Bareilly. Bhagwan Dass is an extortionate and an adulterator. He is very rich. The man who is supposed to get his living by seal-cutting pretends to be very poor. This lets you know as much as is necessary of the four principal tenants in the house of Suddhoo. Then there is Me of course; but I am only the chorus that comes in at the end to explain things. So I do not count.

Suddhoo was not clever. The man who pretended to cut seals was the cleverest of them all — Bhagwan Dass only knew how to lie — except



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Janoo. She was also beautiful, but that was her own affair.

Suddhoo's son at Peshawar was attacked by pleurisy, and old Suddhoo was troubled. The seal-cutter man heard of Suddhoo's anxiety and made capital out of it. He was abreast of the times. He got a friend in Peshawar to telegraph daily accounts of the son's health. And here the story begins.

Suddhoo's cousin's son told me, one evening, that Suddhoo wanted to see me; that he was too old and feeble to come personally, and that I should be conferring an everlasting honour on the house of Suddhoo if I went to him. I went; but I think, seeing how well off Suddhoo was then, that he might have sent something better than an *ekka*, which jolted fearfully, to haul out a future Lieutenant-Governor to the City on a muggy April evening. The *ekka* did not run quickly. It was full dark when we pulled up opposite the door of Ranjit Singh's Tomb near the main gate of the Fort. Here was Suddhoo, and he said that, by reason of my condescension, it was absolutely certain that I should become a Lieutenant-Governor while my hair was yet black. Then we talked about the weather, and the state of my health, and the wheat crops, for fifteen minutes, in the Huzuri Bagh, under the stars.

Suddhoo came to the point at last. He said

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that Janoo had told him that there was an order of the *Sirkar* against magic, because it was feared that magic might one day kill the Empress of India. I didn't know anything about the state of the law; but I fancied that something interesting was going to happen. I said that so far from magic being discouraged by the Government, it was highly commended. The greatest officials of the State practised it themselves. (If the Financial Statement isn't magic, I don't know what is.) Then, to encourage him further, I said that, if there was any *jadoo* afoot, I had not the least objection to giving it my countenance and sanction, and to seeing that it was clean *jadoo*—white magic, as distinguished from the unclean *jadoo* which kills folk. It took a long time before Suddhoo admitted that this was just what he had asked me to come for. Then he told me, in jerks and quavers, that the man who said he cut seals was a sorcerer of the cleanest kind; that every day he gave Suddhoo news of the sick son in Peshawar more quickly than the lightning could fly, and that this news was always corroborated by the letters. Further, that he had told Suddhoo how a great danger was threatening his son, which could be removed by clean *jadoo*; and, of course, heavy payment. I began to see exactly how the land lay, and told Suddhoo that I also understood a little *jadoo* in the Western line, and

## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

would go to his house to see that everything was done decently and in order. We set off together; and on the way Suddhoo told me that he had paid the seal-cutter between one hundred and two hundred rupees already; and the *jadoo* of that night would cost two hundred more. Which was cheap, he said, considering the greatness of his son's danger; but I do not think he meant it.

The lights were all cloaked in the front of the house when we arrived. I could hear awful noises from behind the seal-cutter's shop-front, as if some one were groaning his soul out. Suddhoo shook all over, and while we groped our way upstairs told me that the *jadoo* had begun. Janoo and Azizun met us at the stair-head, and told us that the *jadoo*-work was coming off in their rooms, because there was more space there. Janoo is a lady of a freethinking turn of mind. She whispered that the *jadoo* was an invention to get money out of Suddhoo, and that the seal-cutter would go to a hot place when he died. Suddhoo was nearly crying with fear and old age. He kept walking up and down the room in the half-light, repeating his son's name over and over again, and asking Azizun if the seal-cutter ought not to make a reduction in the case of his own landlord. Janoo pulled me over to the shadow in the recess of the carved bow-windows. The boards were up, and the rooms were only lit by one tiny oil-lamp.

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There was no chance of my being seen if I stayed still.

Presently the groans below ceased, and we heard steps on the staircase. That was the seal-cutter. He stopped outside the door as the terrier barked and Azizun fumbled at the chain, and he told Suddhoo to blow out the lamp. This left the place in jet darkness, except for the red glow from the two *buqas* that belonged to Janoo and Azizun. The seal-cutter came in, and I heard Suddhoo throw himself down on the floor and groan. Azizun caught her breath, and Janoo backed on to one of the beds with a shudder. There was a clink of something metallic, and then shot up a pale blue-green flame near the ground. The light was just enough to show Azizun, pressed against one corner of the room with the terrier between her knees; Janoo, with her hands clasped, leaning forward as she sat on the bed; Suddhoo, face down, quivering, and the seal-cutter.

I hope I may never see another man like that seal-cutter. He was stripped to the waist, with a wreath of white jasmine as thick as my wrist round his forehead, a salmon-coloured loin-cloth round his middle, and a steel bangle on each ankle. This was not awe-inspiring. It was the face of the man that turned me cold. It was a blue-gray in the first place. In the second, the eyes were rolled back till you could only see the whites of them;

## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

and, in the third, the face was the face of a demon — a ghoul — anything you please except of the sleek, oily old ruffian who sat in the daytime over his turning-lathe downstairs. He was lying on his stomach with his arms turned and crossed behind him, as if he had been thrown down pinioned. His head and neck were the only parts of him off the floor. They were nearly at right angles to the body, like the head of a cobra at spring. It was ghastly. In the centre of the room, on the bare earth floor, stood a big, deep, brass basin, with a pale blue-green light floating in the centre like a night-light. Round that basin the man on the floor wriggled himself three times. How he did it I do not know. I could see the muscles ripple along his spine and fall smooth again; but I could not see any other motion. The head seemed the only thing alive about him, except that slow curl and uncurl of the labouring back-muscles. Janoo from the bed was breathing seventy to the minute; Azizun held her hands before her eyes; and old Suddhoo, fingering at the dirt that had got into his white beard, was crying to himself. The horror of it was that the creeping, crawly thing made no sound — only crawled! And, remember, this lasted for ten minutes, while the terrier whined, and Azizun shuddered, and Janoo gasped, and Suddhoo cried.

I felt the hair lift at the back of my head and my heart thump like a thermantidote paddle.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Luckily, the seal-cutter betrayed himself by his most impressive trick and made me calm again. After he had finished that unspeakable triple crawl, he stretched his head away from the floor as high as he could and sent out a jet of fire from his nostrils. Now I knew how fire-spouting is done — I can do it myself — so I felt at ease. The business was a fraud. If he had only kept to that crawl without trying to raise the effect, goodness knows what I might not have thought. Both the girls shrieked at the jet of fire, and the head dropped, chin down, on the floor, with a thud; the whole body lying then like a corpse with its arms trussed. There was a pause of five full minutes after this, and the blue-green flame died down. Janoo stooped to settle one of her anklets, while Azizun turned her face to the wall and took the terrier in her arms. Suddhoo put out an arm mechanically to Janoo's *buqa*, and she slid it across the floor with her foot. Directly above the body and on the wall were a couple of flaming portraits, in stamped-paper frames, of the Queen and the Prince of Wales. They looked down on the performance, and, to my thinking, seemed to heighten the grotesqueness of it all.

Just when the silence was getting unendurable, the body turned over and rolled away from the basin to the side of the room, where it lay stomach up. There was a faint "plop" from the basin



## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

— exactly like the noise a fish makes when it takes a fly — and the green light in the centre revived.

I looked at the basin, and saw, bobbing in the water, the dried, shrivelled, black head of a native baby — open eyes, open mouth, and shaved scalp. It was worse, being so very sudden, than the crawling exhibition. We had no time to say anything before it began to speak.

Read Poe's account of the voice that came from the mesmerised dying man, and you will realise less than one half of the horror of that head's voice.

There was an interval of a second or two between each word, and a sort of "ring, ring, ring" in the note of the voice, like the timbre of a bell. It pealed slowly, as if talking to itself, for several minutes before I got rid of my cold sweat. Then the blessed solution struck me. I looked at the body lying near the doorway, and saw, just where the hollow of the throat joins on the shoulders, a muscle that had nothing to do with any man's regular breathing twitching away steadily. The whole thing was a careful reproduction of the Egyptian teraphin that one reads about sometimes; and the voice was as clever and as appalling a piece of ventriloquism as one could wish to hear. All this time the head was "lip-lip-lapping" against the side of the basin, and speaking. It told Suddhoo, on his face again whining, of his



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

son's illness and of the state of the illness up to the evening of that very night. I always shall respect the seal-cutter for keeping so faithfully to the time of the Peshawar telegrams. It went on to say that skilled doctors were night and day watching over the man's life; and that he would eventually recover if the fee to the potent sorcerer, whose servant was the head in the basin, were doubled.

Here the mistake from the artistic point of view came in. To ask for twice your stipulated fee in a voice that Lazarus might have used when he rose from the dead is absurd. Janoo, who is really a woman of masculine intellect, saw this as quickly as I did. I heard her say, "*Asli nabin! Fareib!*" scornfully under her breath; and just as she said so, the light in the basin died out, the head stopped talking, and we heard the room door creak on its hinges. Then Janoo struck a match, lit the lamp, and we saw that head, basin, and seal-cutter were gone. Suddhoo was wringing his hands and explaining to any one who cared to listen, that, if his chances of eternal salvation depended on it, he could not raise another two hundred rupees. Azizun was nearly in hysterics in the corner; while Janoo sat down composedly on one of the beds to discuss the probabilities of the whole thing being a *bunao*, or "make-up."

## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

I explained as much as I knew of the seal-cutter's way of *jadoo*; but her argument was much more simple — "The magic that is always demanding gifts is no true magic," said she. "My mother told me that the only potent love-spells are those which are told you for love. This seal-cutter man is a liar and a devil. I dare not tell, do anything, or get anything done, because I am in debt to Bhagwan Dass the *bunni* for two gold rings and a heavy anklet. I must get my food from his shop. The seal-cutter is the friend of Bhagwan Dass, and he would poison my food. A fool's *jadoo* has been going on for ten days, and has cost Suddhoo many rupees each night. The seal-cutter used black hens and lemons and *mantras* before. He never showed us anything like this till to-night. Azizun is a fool, and will be a *purdabnashin* soon. Suddhoo has lost his strength and his wits. See now! I had hoped to get from Suddhoo many rupees while he lived, and many more after his death; and behold, he is spending everything on that offspring of a devil and a she-ass, the seal-cutter!"

Here I said, "But what induced Suddhoo to drag me into the business? Of course I can speak to the seal-cutter, and he shall refund. The whole thing is child's talk — shame — and senseless."

"Suddhoo is an old child," said Janoo. "He has lived on the roofs these seventy years, and is

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

as senseless as a milch-goat. He brought you here to assure himself that he was not breaking any law of the *Sirkar*, whose salt he ate many years ago. He worships the dust off the feet of the seal-cutter, and that cow-devourer has forbidden him to go and see his son. What does Suddhoo know of your laws or the lightning-post? I have to watch his money going day by day to that lying beast below."

Janoo stamped her foot on the floor and nearly cried with vexation; while Suddhoo was whimpering under a blanket in the corner, and Azizun was trying to guide the pipe-stem to his foolish old mouth.

. . . . .

Now, the case stands thus. Unthinkingly, I have laid myself open to the charge of aiding and abetting the seal-cutter in obtaining money under false pretences, which is forbidden by Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code. I am helpless in the matter for these reasons. I cannot inform the Police. What witnesses would support my statements? Janoo refuses flatly, and Azizun is a veiled woman somewhere near Bareilly — lost in this big India of ours. I dare not again take the law into my own hands, and speak to the seal-cutter; for certain am I that, not only would Suddhoo disbelieve me, but this step would end in the poisoning of Janoo, who is bound hand and

## IN THE HOUSE OF SUDDHOO

foot by her debt to the *bunnia*. Suddhoo is an old dotard; and whenever we meet mumbles my idiotic joke that the *Sirkar* rather patronises the Black Art than otherwise. His son is well now; but Suddhoo is completely under the influence of the seal-cutter, by whose advice he regulates the affairs of his life. Janoo watches daily the money that she hoped to wheedle out of Suddhoo taken by the seal-cutter, and becomes daily more furious and sullen.

She will never tell, because she dare not; but, unless something happens to prevent her, I am afraid that the seal-cutter will die of cholera—the white arsenic kind—about the middle of May. And thus I shall be privy to a murder in the House of Suddhoo.

## HIS WEDDED WIFE

Cry "Murder !" in the market-place, and each  
Will turn upon his neighbour anxious eyes  
That ask — " Art thou the man ? " We hunted Cain,  
Some centuries ago, across the world.  
That bred the fear our own misdeeds maintain  
To-day.

*Vibart's Moralities.*

SHAKESPEARE says something about worms, or it may be giants or beetles, turning if you tread on them too severely. The safest plan is never to tread on a worm — not even on the last new sub-altern from Home, with his buttons hardly out of their tissue-paper, and the red of sappy English beef in his cheeks. This is a story of the worm that turned. For the sake of brevity, we will call Henry Augustus Ramsay Faizanne, "The Worm," though he really was an exceedingly pretty boy, without a hair on his face, and with a waist like a girl's, when he came out to the Second "Shikarris" and was made unhappy in several ways. The "Shikarris" are a high-caste regiment, and you must be able to do things well — play a banjo, or

## HIS WEDDED WIFE

ride more than little, or sing, or act—to get on with them.

The Worm did nothing except fall off his pony, and knock chips out of gate-posts with his trap. Even that became monotonous after a time. He objected to whist, cut the cloth at billiards, sang out of tune, kept very much to himself, and wrote to his Mamma and sisters at Home. Four of these five things were vices which the “Shikarris” objected to and set themselves to eradicate. Every one knows how subalterns are, by brother subalterns, softened and not permitted to be ferocious. It is good and wholesome, and does no one any harm, unless tempers are lost; and then there is trouble. There was a man once—

The “Shikarris” *shikarred* The Worm very much, and he bore everything without winking. He was so good and so anxious to learn, and flushed so pink, that his education was cut short, and he was left to his own devices by every one except the Senior Subaltern, who continued to make life a burden to The Worm. The Senior Subaltern meant no harm; but his chaff was coarse and he didn't quite understand where to stop. He had been waiting too long for his Company; and that always sours a man. Also he was in love, which made him worse.

One day, after he had borrowed The Worm's trap for a lady who never existed, had used it him-

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self all the afternoon, had sent a note, to The Worm, purporting to come from the lady, and was telling the Mess all about it, The Worm rose in his place and said, in his quiet, lady-like voice — “That was a very pretty sell; but I’ll lay you a month’s pay to a month’s pay when you get your step, that I work a sell on you that you’ll remember for the rest of your days, and the Regiment after you when you’re dead or broke.” The Worm wasn’t angry in the least, and the rest of the Mess shouted. Then the Senior Subaltern looked at The Worm from the boots upwards, and down again, and said — “Done, Baby.” The Worm held the rest of the Mess to witness that the bet had been taken, and retired into a book with a sweet smile.

Two months passed, and the Senior Subaltern still educated The Worm, who began to move about a little more as the hot weather came on. I have said that the Senior Subaltern was in love. The curious thing is that a girl was in love with the Senior Subaltern. Though the Colonel said awful things, and the Majors snorted, and the married Captains looked unutterable wisdom, and the juniors scoffed, those two were engaged.

The Senior Subaltern was so pleased with getting his Company and his acceptance at the same time that he forgot to bother The Worm. The girl was a pretty girl, and had money of her own. She does not come into this story at all.



## HIS WEDDED WIFE

One night, at the beginning of the hot weather, all the Mess, except The Worm, who had gone to his own room to write Home letters, were sitting on the platform outside the Mess House. The Band had finished playing, but no one wanted to go in. And the Captains' wives were there also. The folly of a man in love is unlimited. The Senior Subaltern had been holding forth on the merits of the girl he was engaged to, and the ladies were purring approval while the men yawned, when there was a rustle of skirts in the dark, and a tired, faint voice lifted itself

“Where's my husband?”

I do not wish in the least to reflect on the morality of the “Shikarris”; but it is on record that four men jumped up as if they had been shot. Three of them were married men. Perhaps they were afraid that their wives had come from Home unbeknownst. The fourth said that he had acted on the impulse of the moment. He explained this afterwards.

Then the voice cried, “O Lionel!” Lionel was the Senior Subaltern's name. A woman came into the little circle of light by the candles on the peg-tables, stretching out her hands to the dark where the Senior Subaltern was, and sobbing. We rose to our feet, feeling that things were going to happen and ready to believe the worst. In this bad, small world of ours, one knows so little of

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the life of the next man — which, after all, is entirely his own concern — that one is not surprised when a crash comes. Anything might turn up any day for any one. Perhaps the Senior Subaltern had been trapped in his youth. Men are crippled that way occasionally. We didn't know; we wanted to hear; and the Captains' wives were as anxious as we. If he had been trapped, he was to be excused; for the woman from nowhere, in the dusty shoes and gray travelling-dress, was very lovely, with black hair and great eyes full of tears. She was tall, with a fine figure, and her voice had a running sob in it pitiful to hear. As soon as the Senior Subaltern stood up, she threw her arms round his neck, and called him "my darling," and said she could not bear waiting alone in England, and his letters were so short and cold, and she was his to the end of the world, and would he forgive her? This did not sound quite like a lady's way of speaking. It was too demonstrative.

Things seemed black indeed, and the Captains' wives peered under their eyebrows at the Senior Subaltern, and the Colonel's face set like the Day of Judgment framed in gray bristles, and no one spoke for a while.

Next the Colonel said, very shortly, "Well, Sir?" and the woman sobbed afresh. The Senior Subaltern was half choked with the arms round his neck, but he gasped out — "It's a damned lie!

I never had a wife in my life!" — "Don't swear," said the Colonel. "Come into the Mess. We must sift this clear somehow," and he sighed to himself, for he believed in his "Shikarris," did the Colonel.

We trooped into the ante-room, under the full lights, and there we saw how beautiful the woman was. She stood up in the middle of us all, sometimes choking with crying, then hard and proud, and then holding out her arms to the Senior Subaltern. It was like the fourth act of a tragedy. She told us how the Senior Subaltern had married her when he was Home on leave eighteen months before; and she seemed to know all that we knew, and more too, of his people and his past life. He was white and ashy-gray, trying now and again to break into the torrent of her words; and we, noting how lovely she was and what a criminal he looked, esteemed him a beast of the worst kind. We felt sorry for him, though.

I shall never forget the indictment of the Senior Subaltern by his wife. Nor will he. It was so sudden, rushing out of the dark, unannounced, into our dull lives. The Captains' wives stood back; but their eyes were alight, and you could see that they had already convicted and sentenced the Senior Subaltern. The Colonel seemed five years older. One Major was shading his eyes with his hand and watching the woman from under-

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neath it. Another was chewing his moustache and smiling quietly as if he were witnessing a play. Full in the open space in the centre, by the whist-  
tables, the Senior Subaltern's terrier was hunting for fleas. I remember all this as clearly as though a photograph were in my hand. I remember the look of horror on the Senior Subaltern's face. It was rather like seeing a man hanged; but much more interesting. Finally, the woman wound up by saying that the Senior Subaltern carried a double F. M. in tattoo on his left shoulder. We all knew that, and to our innocent minds it seemed to clinch the matter. But one of the bachelor Majors said very politely, "I presume that your marriage-certificate would be more to the purpose?"

That roused the woman. She stood up and sneered at the Senior Subaltern for a cur, and abused the Major and the Colonel and all the rest. Then she wept, and then she pulled a paper from her breast, saying imperially, "Take that! And let my husband—my lawfully wedded husband—read it aloud—if he dare!"

There was a hush, and the men looked into each other's eyes as the Senior Subaltern came forward in a dazed and dizzy way, and took the paper. We were wondering, as we stared, whether there was anything against any one of us that might turn up later on. The Senior Subaltern's throat was dry; but, as he ran his eye over

## HIS WEDDED WIFE

the paper, he broke out into a hoarse cackle of relief, and said to the woman, "You young black-guard!" But the woman had fled through a door, and on the paper was written, "This is to certify that I, The Worm, have paid in full my debts to the Senior Subaltern, and, further, that the Senior Subaltern is my debtor, by agreement on the 23d of February, as by the Mess attested, to the extent of one month's Captain's pay, in the lawful currency of the Indian Empire."

Then a deputation set off for The Worm's quarters and found him, betwixt and between, unlacing his stays, with the hat, wig, and serge dress on the bed. He came over as he was, and the "Shikarris" shouted till the Gunners' Mess sent over to know if they might have a share of the fun. I think we were all, except the Colonel and the Senior Subaltern, a little disappointed that the scandal had come to nothing. But that is human nature. There could be no two words about The Worm's acting. It leaned as near to a nasty tragedy as anything this side of a joke can. When most of the Subalterns sat upon him with sofa-cushions to find out why he had not said that acting was his strong point, he answered very quietly, "I don't think you ever asked me. I used to act at Home with my sisters." But no acting with girls could account for The Worm's display that night. Personally, I think it was in bad taste.

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Beside being dangerous. There is no sort of use in playing with fire, even for fun.

The "Shikarris" made him President of the Regimental Dramatic Club; and, when the Senior Subaltern paid up his debt, which he did at once, The Worm sank the money in scenery and dresses. He was a good Worm; and the "Shikarris" are proud of him. The only drawback is that he has been christened "Mrs. Senior Subaltern"; and, as there are now two Mrs. Senior Subalterns in the Station, this is sometimes confusing to strangers.

Later on, I will tell you of a case something like this, but with all the jest left out and nothing in it but real trouble.

## THE BROKEN-LINK HANDICAP

While the snaffle holds, or the long-neck stings,  
While the big beam tilts, or the last bell rings,  
While horses are horses to train and to race,  
Then women and wine take a second place

For me — for me —

While a short “ten-three ”

Has a field to squander or fence to face !

*Song of the G. R.*

THERE are more ways of running a horse to suit your book than pulling his head off in the straight. Some men forget this. Understand clearly that all racing is rotten—as everything connected with losing money must be. In India, in addition to its inherent rottenness, it has the merit of being two-thirds sham; looking pretty on paper only. Every one knows every one else far too well for business purposes. How on earth can you rack and harry and post a man for his losings, when you are fond of his wife, and live in the same Station with him? He says, “On the Monday following,” “I can’t settle just yet.” You say, “All right, old man,” and think yourself lucky if you pull off nine hundred out of a two-thousand-



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rupee debt. Any way you look at it, Indian racing is immoral, and expensively immoral. Which is much worse. If a man wants your money, he ought to ask for it, or send round a subscription-list, instead of juggling about the country, with an Australian larrikin; a "brumby," with as much breed as the boy; a brace of *chumars* in gold-laced caps; three or four *ekka*-ponies with hogged manes, and a switch-tailed demirep of a mare called Arab because she has a kink in her flag. Racing leads to the *shroff* quicker than anything else. But if you have no conscience and no sentiments, and good hands, and some knowledge of pace, and ten years' experience of horses, and several thousand rupees a month, I believe that you can occasionally contrive to pay your shoeing-bills.

Did you ever know Shackles — b. w. g., 15. 1 $\frac{3}{8}$  — coarse, loose, mule-like ears — barrel as long as a gate-post — tough as a telegraph-wire — and the queerest brute that ever looked through a bridle? He was of no brand, being one of an ear-nicked mob taken into the *Bucephalus* at £4: 10s. a head to make up freight, and sold raw and out of condition at Calcutta for Rs.275. People who lost money on him called him a "brumby"; but if ever any horse had Harpoon's shoulders and The Gin's temper, Shackles was that horse. Two miles was his own particular distance. He trained himself, ran himself, and rode himself; and, if his jockey

## THE BROKEN-LINK HANDICAP

insulted him by giving him hints, he shut up at once and bucked the boy off. He objected to dictation. Two or three of his owners did not understand this, and lost money in consequence. At last he was bought by a man who discovered that, if a race was to be won, Shackles, and Shackles only, would win it in his own way, so long as his jockey sat still. This man had a riding-boy called Brunt—a lad from Perth, West Australia—and he taught Brunt, with a trainer's whip, the hardest thing a jock can learn—to sit still, to sit still, and to keep on sitting still. When Brunt fairly grasped this truth, Shackles devastated the country. No weight could stop him at his own distance; and the fame of Shackles spread from Ajmir in the South to Chedputter in the North. There was no horse like Shackles, so long as he was allowed to do his work in his own way. But he was beaten in the end; and the story of his fall is enough to make angels weep.

At the lower end of the Chedputter race-course, just before the turn into the straight, the track passes close to a couple of old brick-mounds enclosing a funnel-shaped hollow. The big end of the funnel is not six feet from the railings on the off-side. The astounding peculiarity of the course is that, if you stand at one particular place, about half a mile away, inside the course, and speak at ordinary pitch, your voice just hits the funnel of

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the brick-mounds and makes a curious whining echo there. A man discovered this one morning by accident while out training with a friend. He marked the place to stand and speak from with a couple of bricks, and he kept his knowledge to himself. *Every* peculiarity of a course is worth remembering in a country where rats play the mischief with the elephant-litter, and Stewards build jumps to suit their own stables. This man ran a very fairish country-bred, a long, racking high mare with the temper of a fiend and the paces of an airy wandering seraph — a drifty, glidy stretch. The mare was, as a delicate tribute to Mrs. Reiver, called “The Lady Regula Baddun,” or, for short, Regula Baddun.

Shackles’ jockey, Brunt, was a quite well-behaved boy, but his nerve had been shaken. He began his career by riding jump-races in Melbourne, where a few Stewards want lynching, and was one of the jockeys who came through the awful butchery — perhaps you will recollect it — of the Maribyrnong Plate. The walls were colonial ramparts — logs of *jarrab* spiked into masonry — with wings as strong as Church buttresses. Once in his stride, a horse had to jump or fall. He couldn’t run out. In the Maribyrnong Plate twelve horses were jammed at the second wall. Red Hat, leading, fell this side, and threw out The Gled, and the ruck came up behind, and the

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space between wing and wing was one struggling, screaming, kicking shambles. Four jockeys were taken out dead; three were very badly hurt, and Brunt was among the three. He told the story of the Maribyrnong Plate sometimes; and when he described how Whalley on Red Hat said, as the mare fell under him — “God ha’ mercy, I’m done for!” and how, next instant, Sithee There and White Otter had crushed the life out of poor Whalley, and the dust hid a small hell of men and horses, no one marvelled that Brunt had dropped jump-races and Australia together. Regula Bad-dun’s owner knew that story by heart. Brunt never varied it in the telling. He had no education.

Shackles came to the Chedputter Autumn races one year, and his owner walked about insulting the sportsmen of Chedputter generally, till they went to the Honorary Secretary in a body and said, “Appoint handicappers, and arrange a race which shall break Shackles and humble the pride of his owner.” The Districts rose against Shackles and sent up of their best: Ousel, who was supposed to be able to do his mile in 1-53; Petard, the stud-bred, trained by a cavalry regiment who knew how to train; Gringalet, the ewe lamb of the 75th; Bobolink, the pride of Peshawar; and many others.

They called that race the Broken-link Handicap, because it was to smash Shackles; and the Handicappers piled on the weights, and the Fund

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gave eight hundred rupees, and the distance was "round the course for all horses." Shackles' owner said, "You can arrange the race with regard to Shackles only. So long as you don't bury him under weight-cloths, I don't mind." Regula Baddun's owner said, "I throw in my mare to fret Ousel. Six furlongs is Regula's distance, and she will then lie down and die. So also will Ousel, for his jockey doesn't understand a waiting race." Now, this was a lie, for Regula had been in work for two months at Dehra, and her chances were good, always supposing that Shackles broke a blood-vessel — or Brunt moved on him.

The plunging in the lotteries was fine. They filled eight thousand-rupee lotteries on the Broken-link Handicap, and the account in the "Pioneer" said that "favouritism was divided." In plain English, the various contingents were wild on their respective horses; for the Handicappers had done their work well. The Honorary Secretary shouted himself hoarse through the din; and the smoke of the cheroots was like the smoke, and the rattling of the dice-boxes like the rattle, of small-arm fire.

Ten horses started — very level — and Regula Baddun's owner cantered out on his hack to a place inside the circle of the course, where two bricks had been thrown. He faced towards the brick-mounds at the lower end of the course and waited.

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The story of the running is in the "Pioneer." At the end of the first mile, Shackles crept out of the ruck, well on the outside, ready to get round the turn, lay hold of the bit and spin up the straight before the others knew he had got away. Brunt was sitting still, perfectly happy, listening to the "drum-drum-drum" of the hoofs behind, and knowing that, in about twenty strides, Shackles would draw one deep breath and go up the last half-mile like the "Flying Dutchman." As Shackles went short to take the turn and come abreast of the brick-mound, Brunt heard, above the noise of the wind in his ears, a whining, wailing voice on the off-side, saying — "God ha' mercy, I'm done for!" In one stride, Brunt saw the whole seething smash of the Maribyrnong Plate before him, started in his saddle and gave a yell of terror. The start brought the heels into Shackles' sides, and the scream hurt Shackles' feelings. He couldn't stop dead; but he put out his feet and slid along for fifty yards, and then, very gravely and judicially, bucked off Brunt — a shaking, terror-stricken lump, while Regula Baddun made a neck-and-neck race with Bobolink up the straight, and won by a short head — Petard a bad third. Shackles' owner, in the Stand, tried to think that his field-glasses had gone wrong. Regula Baddun's owner, waiting by the two bricks, gave one deep sigh of relief, and cantered back to the



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Stand. He had won, in lotteries and bets, about fifteen thousand.

It was a Broken-link Handicap with a vengeance. It broke nearly all the men concerned, and nearly broke the heart of Shackles' owner. He went down to interview Brunt. The boy lay, livid and gasping with fright, where he had tumbled off. The sin of losing the race never seemed to strike him. All he knew was that Whalley had "called" him, that the "call" was a warning; and, were he cut in two for it, he would never get up again. His nerve had gone altogether, and he only asked his master to give him a good thrashing, and let him go. He was fit for nothing, he said. He got his dismissal, and crept up to the paddock, white as chalk, with blue lips, his knees giving way under him. People said nasty things in the paddock; but Brunt never heeded. He changed into tweeds, took his stick and went down the road, still shaking with fright, and muttering over and over again — "God ha' mercy, I'm done for!" To the best of my knowledge and belief, he spoke the truth.

So now you know how the Broken-link Handicap was run and won. Of course you don't believe it. You would credit anything about Russia's designs on India, or the recommendations of the Currency Commission; but a little bit of sober fact is more than you can stand.



## BEYOND THE PALE

Love heeds not caste nor sleep a broken bed. I went in search of love and lost myself.—*Hindu Proverb.*

A MAN should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black. Then, whatever trouble falls is in the ordinary course of things — neither sudden, alien nor unexpected.

This is the story of a man who wilfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent everyday society, and paid for it heavily.

He knew too much in the first instance; and he saw too much in the second. He took too deep an interest in native life; but he will never do so again.

Deep away in the heart of the City, behind Jitha Megji's *bustee*, lies Amir Nath's Gully, which ends in a dead-wall pierced by one grated window. At the head of the Gully is a big cowbyre, and the walls on either side of the Gully are without windows. Neither Suchet Singh nor Gaur Chand approve of their women-folk looking into the world. If Durga Charan had been of their opinion, he would have been a happier man to-day,

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and little Bisesa would have been able to knead her own bread. Her room looked out through the grated window into the narrow dark Gully where the sun never came and where the buffaloes wallowed in the blue slime. She was a widow, about fifteen years old, and she prayed the Gods, day and night, to send her a lover; for she did not approve of living alone.

One day, the man — Trejago his name was — came into Amir Nath's Gully on an aimless wandering; and, after he had passed the buffaloes, stumbled over a big heap of cattle-food.

Then he saw that the Gully ended in a trap, and heard a little laugh from behind the grated window. It was a pretty little laugh, and Trejago, knowing that, for all practical purposes, the old "Arabian Nights" are good guides, went forward to the window, and whispered that verse of "The Love Song of Har Dyal" which begins:—

Can a man stand upright in the face of the naked Sun; or a  
Lover in the Presence of his Beloved ?

If my feet fail me, O Heart of my Heart, am I to blame,  
being blinded by the glimpse of your beauty ?

There came the faint *tcblink* of a woman's bracelets from behind the grating, and a little voice went on with the song at the fifth verse:—

Alas! alas! Can the Moon tell the Lotus of her love when  
the Gate of Heaven is shut and the clouds gather for the rains?

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They have taken my Beloved, and driven her with the pack-horses to the North.

There are iron chains on the feet that were set on my heart.  
Call to the bowmen to make ready ——

The voice stopped suddenly, and Trejago walked out of Amir Nath's Gully, wondering who in the world could have capped "The Love Song of Har Dyal" so neatly.

Next morning, as he was driving to office, an old woman threw a packet into his dogcart. In the packet was the half of a broken glass-bangle, one flower of the blood-red *dbak*, a pinch of *bhusa* or cattle-food, and eleven cardamoms. That packet was a letter — not a clumsy compromising letter, but an innocent, unintelligible lover's epistle.

Trejago knew far too much about these things, as I have said. No Englishman should be able to translate object-letters. But Trejago spread all the trifles on the lid of his office-box and began to puzzle them out.

A broken glass-bangle stands for a Hindu widow all India over; because when her husband dies, a woman's bracelets are broken on her wrists. Trejago saw the meaning of the little bit of the glass. The flower of the *dbak* means diversely "desire," "come," "write," or "danger," according to the other things with it. One cardamom means "jealousy"; but when any article is duplicated in an object-letter, it loses its symbolic meaning and

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stands merely for one of a number indicating time, or, if incense, curds, or saffron be sent also, place. The message ran then — “A widow — *dhak* flower and *bhusa*—at eleven o'clock.” The pinch of *bhusa* enlightened Trejago. He saw — this kind of letter leaves much to instinctive knowledge — that the *bhusa* referred to the big heap of cattle-food over which he had fallen in Amir Nath's Gully, and that the message must come from the person behind the grating; she being a widow. So the message ran then — “A widow, in the Gully in which is the heap of *bhusa*, desires you to come at eleven o'clock.”

Trejago threw all the rubbish into the fireplace and laughed. He knew that men in the East do not make love under windows at eleven in the forenoon, nor do women fix appointments a week in advance. So he went, that very night at eleven, into Amir Nath's Gully, clad in a *boorka*, which cloaks a man as well as a woman. Directly the gongs of the City made the hour, the little voice behind the grating took up “The Love Song of Har Dyal” at the verse where the Pathan girl calls upon Har Dyal to return. The song is really pretty in the Vernacular. In English you miss the wail of it. It runs something like this —

Alone upon the housetops to the North  
I turn and watch the lightning in the sky,—  
The glamour of thy footsteps in the North,  
*Come back to me, Beloved, or I die!*

## BEYOND THE PALE

Below my feet the still bazar is laid,  
Far, far below the weary camels lie,—  
The camels and the captives of thy raid.  
*Come back to me, Beloved, or I die!*

My father's wife is old and harsh with years,  
And drudge of all my father's house am I.  
My bread is sorrow and my drink is tears,  
*Come back to me, Beloved, or I die!*

As the song stopped, Trejago stepped up under the grating and whispered —“ I am here.”

Bisesa was good to look upon.

That night was the beginning of many strange things, and of a double life so wild that Trejago to-day sometimes wonders if it were not all a dream. Bisesa, or her old handmaiden who had thrown the object-letter, had detached the heavy grating from the brick-work of the wall ; so that the window slid inside, leaving only a square of raw masonry into which an active man might climb.

In the day-time, Trejago drove through his routine of office-work, or put on his calling-clothes and called on the ladies of the Station ; wondering how long they would know him if they knew of poor little Bisesa. At night, when all the City was still, came the walk under the evil-smelling *boorka*, the patrol through Jitha Megji's *bustee*, the quick turn into Amir Nath's Gully between the sleeping cattle and the dead walls, and then, last of all, Bisesa, and the deep, even breathing of the

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

old woman who slept outside the door of the bare little room that Durga Charan allotted to his sister's daughter. Who or what Durga Charan was, Trejago never inquired; and why in the world he was not discovered and knifed never occurred to him till his madness was over, and Bisesa. . . . But this comes later.

Bisesa was an endless delight to Trejago. She was as ignorant as a bird; and her distorted versions of the rumours from the outside world that had reached her in her room, amused Trejago almost as much as her lisping attempts to pronounce his name — "Christopher." The first syllable was always more than she could manage, and she made funny little gestures with her roseleaf hands, as one throwing the name away, and then, kneeling before Trejago, asked him, exactly as an Englishwoman would do, if he were sure he loved her. Trejago swore that he loved her more than any one else in the world. Which was true.

After a month of this folly, the exigencies of his other life compelled Trejago to be especially attentive to a lady of his acquaintance. You may take it for a fact that anything of this kind is not only noticed and discussed by a man's own race, but by some hundred and fifty natives as well. Trejago had to walk with this lady and talk to her at the Band-stand, and once or twice to drive with her; never for an instant dreaming that this would af-

fect his dearer, out-of-the-way life. But the news flew, in the usual mysterious fashion, from mouth to mouth, till Bisesa's duenna heard of it and told Bisesa. The child was so troubled that she did the household work evilly, and was beaten by Durga Charan's wife in consequence.

A week later, Bisesa taxed Trejago with the flirtation. She understood no gradations and spoke openly. Trejago laughed and Bisesa stamped her little feet—little feet, light as marigold flowers, that could lie in the palm of a man's one hand.

Much that is written about Oriental passion and impulsiveness is exaggerated and compiled at second-hand, but a little of it is true; and when an Englishman finds that little, it is quite as startling as any passion in his own proper life. Bisesa raged and stormed, and finally threatened to kill herself if Trejago did not at once drop the alien Memsahib who had come between them. Trejago tried to explain, and to show her that she did not understand these things from a Western standpoint. Bisesa drew herself up, and said simply—

“I do not. I know only this—it is not good that I should have made you dearer than my own heart to me, Sahib. You are an Englishman. I am only a black girl,”—she was fairer than bargold in the Mint,—“and the widow of a black man.”

Then she sobbed and said—“But on my soul



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and my Mother's soul, I love you. There shall no harm come to you, whatever happens to me."

Trejago argued with the child, and tried to soothe her, but she seemed quite unreasonably disturbed. Nothing would satisfy her save that all relations between them should end. He was to go away at once. And he went. As he dropped out of the window, she kissed his forehead twice, and he walked home wondering.

A week, and then three weeks, passed without a sign from Bisesa. Trejago, thinking that the rupture had lasted quite long enough, went down to Amir Nath's Gully for the fifth time in the three weeks, hoping that his rap at the sill of the shifting grating would be answered. He was not disappointed.

There was a young moon, and one stream of light fell down into Amir Nath's Gully, and struck the grating, which was drawn away as he knocked. From the black dark, Bisesa held out her arms into the moonlight. Both hands had been cut off at the wrists, and the stumps were nearly healed.

Then, as Bisesa bowed her head between her arms and sobbed, some one in the room grunted like a wild beast, and something sharp — knife, sword, or spear — thrust at Trejago in his *boorka*. The stroke missed his body, but cut into one of the muscles of the groin, and he limped slightly from the wound for the rest of his days.

## BEYOND THE PALE

The grating went into its place. There was no sign whatever from inside the house — nothing but the moonlight strip on the high wall, and the blackness of Amir Nath's Gully behind.

The next thing Trejago remembers, after raging and shouting like a madman between those pitiless walls, is that he found himself near the river as the dawn was breaking, threw away his *boorka* and went home bareheaded.

. . . . .

What was the tragedy — whether Bisesa had, in a fit of causeless despair, told everything, or the intrigue had been discovered and she tortured to tell; whether Durga Charan knew his name, and what became of Bisesa — Trejago does not know to this day. Something horrible had happened, and the thought of what it must have been comes upon Trejago in the night now and again, and keeps him company till the morning. One special feature of the case is that he does not know where lies the front of Durga Charan's house. It may open on to a courtyard common to two or more houses, or it may lie behind any one of the gates of Jitha Megji's *bustee*. Trejago cannot tell. He cannot get Bisesa — poor little Bisesa — back again. He has lost her in the City where each man's house is as guarded and as unknowable as the grave; and the grating that opens into Amir Nath's Gully has been walled up.

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But Trejago pays his calls regularly, and is reckoned a very decent sort of man.

There is nothing peculiar about him, except a slight stiffness, caused by a riding-strain, in the right leg.

## IN ERROR

They burnt a corpse upon the sand —  
The light shone out afar;  
It guided home the plunging boats  
That beat from Zanzibar.  
Spirit of Fire, where'er Thy altars rise,  
Thou art Light of Guidance to our eyes!

*Salsette Boat-Song.*

THERE is hope for a man who gets publicly and riotously drunk more often than he ought to do; but there is no hope for the man who drinks secretly and alone in his own house — the man who is never seen to drink.

This is a rule; so there must be an exception to prove it. Moriarty's case was that exception.

He was a Civil Engineer, and the Government, very kindly, put him quite by himself in an out-district, with nobody but natives to talk to and a great deal of work to do. He did his work well in the four years he was utterly alone; but he picked up the vice of secret and solitary drinking, and came up out of the wilderness more old and worn and haggard than the dead-alive life had any right to make him. You know the saying that a

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man who has been alone in the jungle for more than a year is never quite sane all his life after. People credited Moriarty's queerness of manner and moody ways to the solitude, and said that it showed how Government spoilt the futures of its best men. Moriarty had built himself the plinth of a very good reputation in the bridge-dam-girder line. But he knew, every night of the week, that he was taking steps to undermine that reputation with L. L. L. and Christopher and little nips of liqueurs, and filth of that kind. He had a sound constitution and a great brain, or else he would have broken down and died like a sick camel in the district. As better men have done before him.

Government ordered him to Simla after he had come out of the desert; and he went up meaning to try for a post then vacant. That season, Mrs. Reiver — perhaps you will remember her — was in the height of her power, and many men lay under her yoke. Everything bad that could be said has already been said about Mrs. Reiver, in another tale. Moriarty was heavily-built and handsome, very quiet and nervously anxious to please his neighbours when he wasn't sunk in a brown study. He started a good deal at sudden noises or if spoken to without warning; and, when you watched him drinking his glass of water at dinner, you could see the hand shake a little. But all this was put down to nervousness, and the quiet,

steady, sip-sip-sip, fill and sip-sip-sip again, that went on in his own room when he was by himself, was never known. Which was miraculous, seeing how everything in a man's private life is public property in India.

Moriarty was drawn, not into Mrs. Reiver's set, because they were not his sort, but into the power of Mrs. Reiver, and he fell down in front of her and made a goddess of her. This was due to his coming fresh out of the jungle to a big town. He could not scale things properly or see who was what.

Because Mrs. Reiver was cold and hard, he said she was stately and dignified. Because she had no brains, and could not talk cleverly, he said she was reserved and shy. Mrs. Reiver shy ! Because she was unworthy of honour or reverence from any one, he revered her from a distance and dowered her with all the virtues in the Bible and most of those in Shakespeare.

This big, dark, abstracted man who was so nervous when a pony cantered behind him, used to moon in the train of Mrs. Reiver, blushing with pleasure when she threw a word or two his way. His admiration was strictly platonic ; even other women saw and admitted this. He did not move out in Simla, so he heard nothing against his idol : which was satisfactory. Mrs. Reiver took no special notice of him, beyond seeing that he was

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

added to her list of admirers, and going for a walk with him now and then, just to show that he was her property, claimable as such. Moriarty must have done most of the talking, for Mrs. Reiver couldn't talk much to a man of his stamp; and the little she said could not have been profitable. What Moriarty believed in, as he had good reason to, was Mrs. Reiver's influence over him, and, in that belief, set himself seriously to try to do away with the vice that only he himself knew of.

His experiences while he was fighting with it must have been peculiar, but he never described them. Sometimes he would hold off from everything except water for a week. Then, on a rainy night, when no one had asked him out to dinner, and there was a big fire in his room, and everything comfortable, he would sit down and make a big night of it by adding little nip to little nip, planning big schemes of reformation meanwhile, until he threw himself on his bed hopelessly drunk. He suffered next morning.

One night the big crash came. He was troubled in his own mind over his attempts to make himself "worthy of the friendship" of Mrs. Reiver. The past ten days had been very bad ones, and the end of it all was that he received the arrears of two and three quarter years of sipping in one attack of *delirium tremens* of the subdued kind; beginning with suicidal depression, going on to fits and starts



## IN ERROR

and hysteria, and ending with downright raving. As he sat in a chair in front of the fire, or walked up and down the room picking a handkerchief to pieces, you heard what poor Moriarty really thought of Mrs. Reiver, for he raved about her and his own fall for the most part; though he ravelled some P. W. D. accounts into the same skein of thought. He talked and talked, and talked in a low dry whisper to himself, and there was no stopping him. He seemed to know that there was something wrong, and twice tried to pull himself together and confer rationally with the Doctor; but his mind ran out of control at once, and he fell back to a whisper and the story of his troubles. It is terrible to hear a big man babbling like a child of all that a man usually locks up and puts away in the deep of his heart. Moriarty read out his very soul for the benefit of any one who was in the room between ten-thirty that night and two-forty-five next morning.

From what he said, one gathered how immense an influence Mrs. Reiver held over him, and how thoroughly he felt for his own lapse. His whisperings cannot, of course, be put down here; but they were very instructive — as showing the errors of his estimates.

When the trouble was over, and his few acquaintances were pitying him for the bad attack

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of jungle-fever that had so pulled him down, Moriarty swore a big oath to himself and went abroad again with Mrs. Reiver till the end of the season, adoring her in a quiet and deferential way as an angel from heaven. Later on, he took to riding — not hacking, but honest riding — which was good proof that he was improving, and you could slam doors behind him without his jumping to his feet with a gasp. That, again, was hopeful.

How he kept his oath, and what it cost him in the beginning, nobody knows. He certainly managed to compass the hardest thing that a man who has drunk heavily can do. He took his peg and wine at dinner; but he never drank alone, and never let what he drank have the least hold on him.

Once he told a bosom-friend the story of his great trouble, and how the “influence of a pure honest woman, and an angel as well” had saved him. When the man — startled at anything good being laid to Mrs. Reiver’s door — laughed, it cost him Moriarty’s friendship. Moriarty, who is married now to a woman ten thousand times better than Mrs. Reiver — a woman who believes that there is no man on earth as good and clever as her husband — will go down to his grave vowing and protesting that Mrs. Reiver saved him from ruin in both worlds.

That she knew anything of Moriarty’s weakness

## IN ERROR

nobody believed for a moment. That she would have cut him dead, thrown him over, and acquainted all her friends with her discovery, if she had known of it, nobody who knew her doubted for an instant.

Moriarty thought her something she never was, and in that belief saved himself. Which was just as good as though she had been everything that he had imagined.

But the question is, What claim will Mrs. Reiver have to the credit of Moriarty's salvation, when her day of reckoning comes?

## A BANK FRAUD

He drank strong waters and his speech was coarse ;  
He purchased raiment and forbore to pay ;  
He stuck a trusting junior with a horse,  
And won Gymkhanas in a doubtful way.  
Then, 'twixt a vice and folly, turned aside  
To do good deeds and straight to cloak them, lied.

*The Mess Room.*

IF Reggie Burke were in India now, he would resent this tale being told; but as he is in Hong-kong and won't see it, the telling is safe. He was the man who worked the big fraud on the Sind and Sialkote Bank. He was manager of an up-country Branch, and a sound practical man with a large experience of native loan and insurance work. He could combine the frivolities of ordinary life with his work, and yet do well. Reggie Burke rode anything that would let him get up, danced as neatly as he rode, and was wanted for every sort of amusement in the Station.

As he said himself, and as many men found out rather to their surprise, there were two Burkes, both very much at your service. "Reggie Burke," between four and ten, ready for anything from a

## A BANK FRAUD

hot-weather gymkhana to a riding-picnic, and, between ten and four, "Mr. Reginald Burke, Manager of the Sind and Sialkote Branch Bank." You might play polo with him one afternoon and hear him express his opinions when a man crossed; and you might call on him next morning to raise a two-thousand-rupee loan on a five-hundred pound insurance policy, eighty pounds paid in premiums. He would recognise you, but you would have some trouble in recognising him.

The Directors of the Bank—it had its headquarters in Calcutta and its General Manager's word carried weight with the Government—picked their men well. They had tested Reggie up to a fairly severe breaking-strain. They trusted him just as much as Directors ever trust Managers. You must see for yourself whether their trust was misplaced.

Reggie's Branch was in a big Station, and worked with the usual staff—one Manager, one Accountant, both English, a Cashier, and a horde of native clerks; besides the Police patrol at nights outside. The bulk of its work, for it was in a thriving district, was *boondi* and accommodation of all kinds. A fool has no grip of this sort of business; and a clever man who does not go about among his clients, and know more than a little of their affairs, is worse than a fool. Reggie was young-looking, clean-shaved, with a twinkle

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in his eye, and a head that nothing short of a gallon of the Gunners' Madeira could make any impression on.

One day, at a big dinner, he announced casually that the Directors had shifted on to him a Natural Curiosity, from England, in the Accountant line. He was perfectly correct. Mr. Silas Riley, Accountant, was a most curious animal—a long, gawky, rawboned Yorkshireman, full of the savage self-conceit that blossoms only in the best county in England. Arrogance was a mild word for the mental attitude of Mr. S. Riley. He had worked himself up, after seven years, to a Cashier's position in a Huddersfield Bank; and all his experience lay among the factories of the North. Perhaps he would have done better on the Bombay side, where they are happy with one-half per cent. profits, and money is cheap. He was useless for Upper India and a wheat Province, where a man wants a large head and a touch of imagination if he is to turn out a satisfactory balance-sheet.

He was wonderfully narrow-minded in business, and, being new to the country, had no notion that Indian banking is totally distinct from Home work. Like most clever self-made men, he had much simplicity in his nature; and, somehow or other, had construed the ordinarily polite terms of his letter of engagement into a belief that the Directors had chosen him on account of his special

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and brilliant talents, and that they set great store by him. This notion grew and crystallised; thus adding to his natural North-country conceit. Further, he was delicate, suffered from some trouble in his chest, and was short in his temper.

You will admit that Reggie had reason to call his new Accountant a Natural Curiosity. The two men failed to hit it off at all. Riley considered Reggie a wild, feather-headed idiot, given to Heaven only knew what dissipation in low places called "Messess," and totally unfit for the serious and solemn vocation of banking. He could never get over Reggie's look of youth and "you-be-damned" air; and he couldn't understand Reggie's friends — clean-built, careless men in the Army — who rode over to big Sunday breakfasts at the Bank, and told sultry stories till Riley got up and left the room. Riley was always showing Reggie how the business ought to be conducted, and Reggie had more than once to remind him that seven years' limited experience between Huddersfield and Beverley did not qualify a man to steer a big up-country business. Then Riley sulked, and referred to himself as a pillar of the Bank and a cherished friend of the Directors, and Reggie tore his hair. If a man's English subordinates fail him in India, he comes to a hard time indeed, for native help has strict limitations. In the winter Riley went sick for weeks at a time with his lung



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complaint, and this threw more work on Reggie. But he preferred it to the everlasting friction when Riley was well.

One of the Travelling Inspectors of the Bank discovered these collapses and reported them to the Directors. Now Riley had been foisted on the Bank by an M. P., who wanted the support of Riley's father, who, again, was anxious to get his son out to a warmer climate because of those lungs. The M. P. had interest in the Bank; but one of the Directors wanted to advance a nominee of his own; and, after Riley's father had died, he made the rest of the Board see that an Accountant who was sick for half the year had better give place to a healthy man. If Riley had known the real story of his appointment, he might have behaved better; but, knowing nothing, his stretches of sickness alternated with restless, persistent, meddling irritation of Reggie, and all the hundred ways in which conceit in a subordinate situation can find play. Reggie used to call him striking and hair-curling names behind his back as a relief to his own feelings; but he never abused him to his face, because he said, "Riley is such a frail beast that half of his loathsome conceit is due to pains in the chest."

Late one April, Riley went very sick indeed. The Doctor punched him and thumped him, and told him he would be better before long. Then the

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Doctor went to Reggie and said — “Do you know how sick your Accountant is?” — “No!” said Reggie — “The worse the better, confound him! He’s a clacking nuisance when he’s well. I’ll let you take away the Bank Safe if you can drug him silent for this hot weather.”

But the Doctor did not laugh — “Man, I’m not joking,” he said. “I’ll give him another three months in his bed and a week or so more to die in. On my honour and reputation that’s all the grace he has in this world. Consumption has hold of him to the marrow.”

Reggie’s face changed at once into the face of “Mr. Reginald Burke,” and he answered, “What can I do?” — “Nothing,” said the Doctor. “For all practical purposes the man is dead already. Keep him quiet and cheerful, and tell him he’s going to recover. That’s all. I’ll look after him to the end, of course.”

The Doctor went away, and Reggie sat down to open the evening mail. His first letter was one from the Directors, intimating for his information that Mr. Riley was to resign, under a month’s notice, by the terms of his agreement, telling Reggie that their letter to Riley would follow, and advising Reggie of the coming of a new Accountant, a man whom Reggie knew and liked.

Reggie lit a cheroot, and, before he had finished smoking, he had sketched the outline of a fraud.

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He put away — burked — the Directors' letter, and went in to talk to Riley, who was as ungracious as usual, and fretting himself over the way the Bank would run during his illness. He never thought of the extra work on Reggie's shoulders, but solely of the damage to his own prospects of advancement. Then Reggie assured him that everything would be well, and that he, Reggie, would confer with Riley daily on the management of the Bank. Riley was a little soothed, but he hinted in as many words that he did not think much of Reggie's business capacity. Reggie was humble. And he had letters in his desk from the Directors that a Gilbarte or a Hardie might have been proud of!

The days passed in the big darkened house, and the Directors' letter of dismissal to Riley came and was put away by Reggie, who, every evening, brought the books to Riley's room, and showed him what had been going forward, while Riley snarled. Reggie did his best to make statements pleasing to Riley, but the Accountant was sure that the Bank was going to rack and ruin without him. In June, as the lying in bed told on his spirit, he asked whether his absence had been noted by the Directors, and Reggie said that they had written most sympathetic letters, hoping that he would be able to resume his valuable services before long. He showed Riley the letters; and Riley said that the Directors ought to have written

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to him direct. A few days later, Reggie opened Riley's mail in the half-light of the room, and gave him the sheet — not the envelope — of a letter to Riley from the Directors. Riley said he would thank Reggie not to interfere with his private papers, specially as Reggie knew he was too weak to open his own letters. Reggie apologised.

Then Riley's mood changed, and he lectured Reggie on his evil ways: his horses and his bad friends. "Of course, lying here on my back, Mr. Burke, I can't keep you straight; but when I'm well I *do* hope you'll pay some heed to my words." Reggie, who had dropped polo, and dinners, and tennis and all, to attend to Riley, said that he was penitent, and settled Riley's head on the pillow and heard him fret and contradict in hard, dry, hacking whispers, without a sign of impatience. This, at the end of a heavy day's office work, doing double duty, in the latter half of June.

When the new Accountant came, Reggie told him the facts of the case, and announced to Riley that he had a guest staying with him. Riley said that he might have had more consideration than to entertain his "doubtful friends" at such a time. Reggie made Carron, the new Accountant, sleep at the Club in consequence. Carron's arrival took some of the heavy work off his shoulders, and he had time to attend to Riley's exactions—to explain, soothe, invent, and settle and re-settle the

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poor wretch in bed, and to forge complimentary letters from Calcutta. At the end of the first month Riley wished to send some money home to his mother. Reggie sent the draft. At the end of the second month Riley's salary came in just the same. Reggie paid it out of his own pocket, and, with it, wrote Riley a beautiful letter from the Directors.

Riley was very ill indeed, but the flame of his life burnt unsteadily. Now and then he would be cheerful and confident about the future, sketching plans for going Home and seeing his mother. Reggie listened patiently when the office-work was over, and encouraged him.

At other times Riley insisted on Reggie reading the Bible and grim "Methody" tracts to him. Out of these tracts he pointed morals directed at his Manager. But he always found time to worry Reggie about the working of the Bank, and to show him where the weak points lay.

This indoor, sickroom life and constant strains wore Reggie down a good deal, and shook his nerves, and lowered his billiard play by forty points. But the business of the Bank, and the business of the sickroom, had to go on, though the glass was 116° in the shade.

At the end of the third month Riley was sinking fast, and had begun to realise that he was very sick.

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But the conceit that made him worry Reggie kept him from believing the worst. "He wants some sort of mental stimulant if he is to drag on," said the Doctor. "Keep him interested in life if you care about his living." So Riley, contrary to all the laws of business and the finance, received a 25-per-cent. rise of salary from the Directors. The "mental stimulant" succeeded beautifully. Riley was happy and cheerful, and, as is often the case in consumption, healthiest in mind when the body was weakest. He lingered for a full month, snarling and fretting about the Bank, talking of the future, hearing the Bible read, lecturing Reggie on sin, and wondering when he would be able to move abroad.

But at the end of September, one mercilessly hot evening, he rose up in his bed with a little gasp, and said quickly to Reggie — "Mr. Burke, I am going to die. I know it in myself. My chest is all hollow inside, and there's nothing to breathe with. To the best of my knowledge I have done nowt"—he was returning to the talk of his boyhood — "to lie heavy on my conscience. God be thanked, I have been preserved from the grosser forms of sin; and I counsel *you*, Mr. Burke . . ."

Here his voice died down, and Reggie stooped over him.

"Send my salary for September to my Mother



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. . done great things with the Bank if I had been spared . . . mistaken policy . . . no fault of mine. . . .”

Then he turned his face to the wall and died.

Reggie drew the sheet over Its face, and went out into the verandah, with his last “mental stimulant” — a letter of condolence and sympathy from the Directors — unused in his pocket.

“If I’d been only ten minutes earlier,” thought Reggie, “I might have heartened him up to pull through another day.”



## TODS' AMENDMENT

The World hath set its heavy yoke  
Upon the old white-bearded folk  
Who strive to please the King.  
God's mercy is upon the young,  
God's wisdom in the baby tongue  
That fears not anything.

*The Parable of Chajju Bhagat.*

Now Tods' Mamma was a singularly charming woman, and every one in Simla knew Tods. Most men had saved him from death on occasions. He was beyond his *ayab's* control altogether, and perilled his life daily to find out what would happen if you pulled a Mountain Battery mule's tail. He was an utterly fearless young Pagan, about six years old, and the only baby who ever broke the holy calm of the Supreme Legislative Council.

It happened this way: Tods' pet kid got loose, and fled up the hill, off the Boileaugunge Road, Tods after it, until it burst into the Viceregal Lodge lawn, then attached to "Peterhoff." The Council were sitting at the time, and the windows were open because it was warm. The Red Lancer in the porch told Tods to go away; but Tods

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knew the Red Lancer and most of the Members of Council personally. Moreover, he had firm hold of the kid's collar, and was being dragged all across the flower-beds. "Give my *salaam* to the long Councillor Sahib, and ask him to help me take *Moti* back!" gasped Tods. The Council heard the noise through the open windows; and, after an interval, was seen the shocking spectacle of a Legal Member and a Lieutenant-Governor helping, under the direct patronage of a Commander-in-Chief and a Viceroy, one small and very dirty boy in a sailor's suit and a tangle of brown hair, to coerce a lively and rebellious kid. They headed it off down the path to the Mall, and Tods went home in triumph and told his Mamma that *all* the Councillor Sahibs had been helping him to catch *Moti*. Whereat his Mamma smacked Tods for interfering with the administration of the Empire; but Tods met the Legal Member the next day, and told him in confidence that if the Legal Member ever wanted to catch a goat, he, Tods, would give him all the help in his power. "Thank you, Tods," said the Legal Member.

Tods was the idol of some eighty *jhampanis*, and half as many *saises*. He saluted them all as "O Brother!" It never entered his head that any living human being could disobey his orders; and he was the buffer between the servants and his

## TODS' AMENDMENT

Mamma's wrath. The working of that household turned on Tods, who was adored by every one from the *dhoby* to the dog-boy. Even Futteh Khan, the villainous loafer *kbit* from Mussoorie, shirked risking Tods' displeasure for fear his comrades should look down on him.

So Tods had honour in the land from Boileaugunge to Chota Simla, and ruled justly according to his lights. Of course, he spoke Urdu, but he had also mastered many queer side-speeches like the *chotee bolee* of the women, and held grave converse with shopkeepers and Hill-coolies alike. He was precocious for his age, and his mixing with natives had taught him some of the more bitter truths of life: the meanness and the sordidness of it. He used, over his bread and milk, to deliver solemn and serious aphorisms, translated from the vernacular into the English, that made his Mamma jump and vow that Tods *must* go Home next hot weather.

Just when Tods was in the bloom of his power, the Supreme Legislature were hacking out a Bill for the Sub-Montane Tracts, a revision of the then Act, smaller than the Punjab Land Bill but affecting a few hundred thousand people none the less. The Legal Member had built, and bolstered, and embroidered, and amended that Bill, till it looked beautiful on paper. Then the Council began to settle what they called the "minor details."

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

As if any Englishman legislating for natives knows enough to know which are the minor and which are the major points, from the native point of view, of any measure ! That Bill was a triumph of "safeguarding the interests of the tenant." One clause provided that land should not be leased on longer terms than five years at a stretch ; because, if the landlord had a tenant bound down for, say, twenty years, he would squeeze the very life out of him. The notion was to keep up a stream of independent cultivators in the Sub-Montane Tracts ; and ethnologically and politically the notion was correct. The only drawback was that it was altogether wrong. A native's life in India implies the life of his son. Wherefore, you cannot legislate for one generation at a time. You must consider the next from the native point of view. Curiously enough, the native now and then, and in Northern India more particularly, hates being over-protected against himself. There was a Naga village once, where they lived on dead *and* buried Commissariat mules. . . . But that is another story.

For many reasons, to be explained later, the people concerned objected to the Bill. The Native Member in Council knew as much about Punjabis as he knew about Charing Cross. He had said in Calcutta that "the Bill was entirely in accord with the desires of that large and important class, the cultivators ;" and so on, and so on. The

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Legal Member's knowledge of natives was limited to English-speaking Durbaris and his own red *chaprassis*, the Sub-Montane Tracts concerned no one in particular, the Deputy Commissioners were a good deal too driven to make representations, and the measure was one which dealt with small landholders only. Nevertheless, the Legal Member prayed that it might be correct, for he was a nervously conscientious man. He did not know that no man can tell what natives think unless he mixes with them with the varnish off. And not always then. But he did the best he knew. And the measure came up to the Supreme Council for the final touches, while Tods patrolled the Burra Simla Bazar in his morning rides, and played with the monkey belonging to Ditta Mull, the *bunnia*, and listened, as a child listens, to all the stray talk about this new freak of the Lord Sahib's.

One day there was a dinner-party at the house of Tods' Mamma, and the Legal Member came. Tods was in bed, but he kept awake till he heard the bursts of laughter from the men over the coffee. Then he paddled out in his little red flannel dressing-gown and his night-suit and took refuge by the side of his father, knowing that he would not be sent back. "See the miseries of having a family!" said Tods' father, giving Tods three prunes, some water in a glass that had been used for claret, and telling him to sit still. Tods sucked

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the prunes slowly, knowing that he would have to go when they were finished, and sipped the pink water like a man of the world, as he listened to the conversation. Presently, the Legal Member, talking "shop" to the Head of a Department, mentioned his Bill by its full name — "The Sub-Montane Tracts *Ryotwary* Revised Enactment." Tods caught the one native word, and lifting up his small voice said —

"Oh, I know *all* about that! Has it been *murramuttet* yet, Councillor Sahib?"

"How much?" said the Legal Member.

"*Murramuttet*—mended.—Put *theek*, you know—made nice to please Ditta Mull!"

The Legal Member left his place and moved up next to Tods.

"What do you know about *ryotwari*, little man?" he said.

"I'm not a little man, I'm Tods, and I know *all* about it. Ditta Mull, and Choga Lall, and Amir Nath, and — oh, *lakhs* of my friends tell me about it in the bazars when I talk to them."

"Oh, they do — do they? What do they say, Tods?"

Tods tucked his feet under his red flannel dressing-gown and said — "I must *fink*."

The Legal Member waited patiently. Then Tods with infinite compassion —



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"You don't speak my talk, do you, Councillor Sahib?"

"No; I am sorry to say I do not," said the Legal Member.

"Very well," said 'Tods, "I must *fink* in English."

He spent a minute putting his ideas in order, and began very slowly, translating in his mind from the vernacular to English, as many Anglo-Indian children do. You must remember that the Legal Member helped him on by questions when he halted, for Tods was not equal to the sustained flight of oratory that follows.

"Ditta Mull says, 'This thing is the talk of a child, and was made up by fools.' But *I* don't think you are a fool, Councillor Sahib," said Tods hastily. "You caught my goat. This is what Ditta Mull says—'I am not a fool, and why should the Sirkar say I am a child? I can see if the land is good and if the landlord is good. If I am a fool, the sin is upon my own head. For five years I take my ground for which I have saved money, and a wife I take too, and a little son is born.' Ditta Mull has one daughter now, but he *says* he will have a son, soon. And he says, 'At the end of five years, by this new *bundobust*, I must go. If I do not go, I must get fresh seals and *takkus*-stamps on the papers, perhaps in the middle of the harvest, and to go to the law-courts once is



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wisdom, but to go twice is *Jebannum*.' That is *quite* true," explained Tods gravely. "All my friends say so. And Ditta Mull says, 'Always fresh *takkus* and paying money to *vakils* and *chaprassis* and law-courts every five years, or else the landlord makes me go. Why do I want to go? Am I a fool? If I am a fool and do not know, after forty years, good land when I see it, let me die! But if the new *bundobust* says for *fifteen* years, that it is good and wise. My little son is a man, and I am burnt, and he takes the ground or another ground, paying only once for the *takkus*-stamps on the papers, and his little son is born, and at the end of fifteen years is a man too. But what profit is there in five years and fresh papers? Nothing but *dikk*, trouble, *dikk*. We are not young men who take these lands, but old ones—not farmers, but tradesmen with a little money—and for fifteen years we shall have peace. Nor are we children that the Sirkar should treat us so.'"

Here Tods stopped short, for the whole table were listening. The Legal Member said to Tods, "Is that all?"

"All I can remember," said Tods. "But you should see Ditta Mull's big monkey. It's just like a Councillor Sahib."

"Tods! Go to bed," said his father.

Tods gathered up his dressing-gown tail and departed.

## TODS' AMENDMENT

The Legal Member brought his hand down on the table with a crash—"By Jove!" said the Legal Member, "I believe the boy is right. The short tenure *is* the weak point."

He left early, thinking over what Tod's had said. Now, it was obviously impossible for the Legal Member to play with a *bunnia's* monkey, by way of getting understanding; but he did better. He made inquiries, always bearing in mind the fact that the real native—not the hybrid, University-trained mule—is as timid as a colt, and, little by little, he coaxed some of the men whom the measure concerned most intimately to give in their views, which squared very closely with Tod's evidence.

So the Bill was amended in that clause; and the Legal Member was filled with an uneasy suspicion that Native Members represent very little except the Orders they carry on their bosoms. But he put the thought from him as illiberal. He was a most Liberal man.

After a time, the news spread through the bazars that Tod's had got the Bill recast in the tenure-clause, and if Tod's Mamma had not interfered. Tod's would have made himself sick on the baskets of fruit and pistachio nuts and Cabuli grapes and almonds that crowded the verandah. Till he went Home, Tod's ranked some few degrees before the Viceroy in popular estimation. But

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for the little life of him, Tods could not understand why.

In the Legal Member's private-paper-box still lies the rough draft of the Sub-Montane Tracts *Ryotwary* Revised Enactment; and, opposite the twenty-second clause, pencilled in blue chalk, and signed by the Legal Member, are the words "*Tods' Amendment.*"

## IN THE PRIDE OF HIS YOUTH

“Stopped in the straight when the race was his own!

Look at him cutting it — cur to the bone!”

“Ask, ere the youngster be rated and chidden,

What did he carry and how was he ridden?

Maybe they used him too much at the start;

Maybe Fate’s weight-cloths are breaking his heart.”

*Life’s Handicap.*

WHEN I was telling you of the joke that The Worm played off on the Senior Subaltern, I promised a somewhat similar tale, but with all the jest left out. This is that tale.

Dicky Hatt was kidnapped in his early, early youth—neither by landlady’s daughter, housemaid, barmaid, nor cook, but by a girl so nearly of his own caste that only a woman could have said she was just the least little bit in the world below it. This happened a month before he came out to India, and five days after his one-and-twentieth birthday. The girl was nineteen—six years older than Dicky in the things of this world, that is to say—and, for the time, twice as foolish as he.

Excepting, always, falling off a horse, there is nothing more fatally easy than marriage before

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

the Registrar. The ceremony costs less than fifty shillings, and is remarkably like walking into a pawn-shop. After the declarations of residence have been put in, four minutes will cover the rest of the proceedings — fees, attestation, and all. Then the Registrar slides the blotting-pad over the names, and says grimly with his pen between his teeth, “Now you’re man and wife;” and the couple walk out into the street feeling as if something were horribly illegal somewhere.

But that ceremony holds and can drag a man to his undoing just as thoroughly as the “long as ye both shall live” curse from the altar-rails, with the bridesmaids giggling behind, and “The Voice that breathed o’er Eden” lifting the roof off. In this manner was Dicky Hatt kidnapped, and he considered it vastly fine, for he had received an appointment in India which carried a magnificent salary from the Home point of view. The marriage was to be kept secret for a year. Then Mrs. Dicky Hatt was to come out, and the rest of life was to be a glorious golden mist. That was how they sketched it under the Addison Road Station lamps; and, after one short month, came Gravesend and Dicky steaming out to his new life, and the girl crying in a thirty-shillings-a-week bed-and-living-room, in a back-street off Montpelier Square near the Knightsbridge Barracks.

But the country that Dicky came to was a hard

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land where men of twenty-one were reckoned very small boys indeed, and life was expensive. The salary that loomed so large six thousand miles away did not go far. Particularly when Dicky divided it by two, and remitted more than the fair half, at  $1\text{-}6\frac{7}{8}$ , to Montpelier Square. One hundred and thirty-five rupees out of three hundred and thirty is not much to live on; but it was absurd to suppose that Mrs. Hatt could exist for ever on the £20 held back by Dicky from his outfit allowance. Dicky saw this and remitted at once; always remembering that Rs.700 were to be paid, twelve months later, for a first-class passage out for a lady. When you add to these trifling details the natural instincts of a boy beginning a new life in a new country and longing to go about and enjoy himself, and the necessity for grappling with strange work — which, properly speaking, should take up a boy's undivided attention — you will see that Dicky started handicapped. He saw it himself for a breath or two; but he did not guess the full beauty of his future.

As the hot weather began, the shackles settled on him and ate into his flesh. First would come letters — big, crossed, seven-sheet letters — from his wife, telling him how she longed to see him, and what a Heaven upon earth would be their property when they met. Then some boy of the chummery wherein Dicky lodged would pound on

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the door of his bare little room, and tell him to come out to look at a pony — the very thing to suit him. Dicky could not afford ponies. He had to explain this. Dicky could not afford living in the chummery, modest as it was. He had to explain this before he moved to a single room next the office where he worked all day. He kept house on a green oil-cloth table-cover, one chair, one bedstead, one photograph, one tooth-glass very strong and thick, a seven-rupee eight-anna filter, and messing by contract at thirty-seven rupees a month. Which last item was extortion. He had no punkah, for a punkah costs fifteen rupees a month; but he slept on the roof of the office with all his wife's letters under his pillow. Now and again he was asked out to dinner, where he got both a punkah and an iced drink. But this was seldom, for people objected to recognizing a boy who had evidently the instincts of a Scotch tallow-chandler, and who lived in such a nasty fashion. Dicky could not subscribe to any amusement, so he found no amusement except the pleasure of turning over his Bank-book and reading what it said about "loans on approved security." That cost nothing. He remitted through a Bombay Bank, by the way, and the Station knew nothing of his private affairs.

Every month he sent Home all he could possibly spare for his wife and for another reason which was



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expected to explain itself shortly, and would require more money.

About this time Dicky was overtaken with the nervous, haunting fear that besets married men when they are out of sorts. He had no pension to look to. What if he should die suddenly, and leave his wife unprovided for? The thought used to lay hold of him in the still, hot nights on the roof, till the shaking of his heart made him think that he was going to die then and there of heart-disease. Now this is a frame of mind which no boy has a right to know. It is a strong man's trouble; but, coming when it did, it nearly drove poor punkahless, perspiring Dicky Hatt mad. He could tell no one about it.

A certain amount of "screw" is as necessary for a man as for a billiard-ball. It makes them both do wonderful things. Dicky needed money badly, and he worked for it like a horse. But, naturally, the men who owned him knew that a boy can live very comfortably on a certain income—pay in India is a matter of age not merit, you see, and, if their particular boy wished to work like two boys, Business forbid that they should stop him. But Business forbid that they should give him an increase of pay at his present ridiculously immature age. So Dicky won certain rises of salary—ample for a boy—not enough for a wife and a child—certainly too little for the seven-hundred-rupee

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passage that he and Mrs. Hatt had discussed so lightly once upon a time. And with this he was forced to be content.

Somehow, all his money seemed to fade away in Home drafts and the crushing Exchange, and the tone of the Home letters changed and grew querulous. "Why wouldn't Dicky have his wife and the baby out? Surely he had a salary—a fine salary—and it was too bad of him to enjoy himself in India. But would he—could he—make the next draft a little more elastic?" Here followed a list of baby's kit, as long as a Parsee's bill. Then Dicky, whose heart yearned to his wife and the little son he had never seen—which, again, is a feeling no boy is entitled to—enlarged the draft and wrote queer half-boy, half-man letters, saying that life was not so enjoyable after all, and would the little wife wait yet a little longer? But the little wife, however much she approved of money, objected to waiting, and there was a strange, hard sort of ring in her letters that Dicky didn't understand. How could he, poor boy?

Later on still—just as Dicky had been told—*apropos* of another youngster who had "made a fool of himself" as the saying is—that matrimony would not only ruin his further chances of advancement, but would lose him his present appointment—came the news that the baby, his own little, little son, had died, and, behind this, forty lines

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of an angry woman's scrawl, saying the death might have been averted if certain things, all costing money, had been done, or if the mother and the baby had been with Dicky. The letter struck at Dicky's naked heart; but, not being officially entitled to a baby, he could show no sign of trouble.

How Dicky won through the next four months, and what hope he kept alight to force him into his work, no one dare say. He pounded on, the seven-hundred-rupee passage as far away as ever, and his style of living unchanged, except when he launched into a new filter. There was the strain of his office-work, and the strain of his remittances, and the knowledge of his boy's death, which touched the boy more, perhaps, than it would have touched a man; and, beyond all, the enduring strain of his daily life. Gray-headed seniors, who approved of his thrift and his fashion of denying himself everything pleasant, reminded him of the old saw that says —

If a youth would be distinguished in his art, art, art,  
He must keep the girls away from his heart, heart, heart.

And Dicky, who fancied he had been through every trouble that a man is permitted to know, had to laugh and agree; with the last line of his balanced Bank-book jingling in his head day and night.

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But he had one more sorrow to digest before the end. There arrived a letter from the little wife — the natural sequence of the others if Dicky had only known it — and the burden of that letter was “gone with a handsomer man than you.” It was a rather curious production, without stops, something like this — “She was not going to wait for ever and the baby was dead and Dicky was only a boy and he would never set eyes on her again and why hadn’t he waved his handkerchief to her when he left Gravesend and God was her judge she was a wicked woman but Dicky was worse enjoying himself in India and this other man loved the ground she trod on and would Dicky ever forgive her for she would never forgive Dicky; and there was no address to write to.”

Instead of thanking his stars that he was free, Dicky discovered exactly how an injured husband feels — again, not at all the knowledge to which a boy is entitled — for his mind went back to his wife as he remembered her in the thirty-shilling “suite” in Montpelier Square, when the dawn of his last morning in England was breaking, and she was crying in the bed. Whereat he rolled about on his bed and bit his fingers. He never stopped to think whether, if he had met Mrs. Hatt after those two years, he would have discovered that he and she had grown quite different and new persons. This, theoretically, he ought to have done.

## IN THE PRIDE OF HIS YOUTH

He spent the night after the English Mail came in rather severe pain.

Next morning, Dicky Hatt felt disinclined to work. He argued that he had missed the pleasure of youth. He was tired, and he had tasted all the sorrow in life before three-and-twenty. His Honour was gone — that was the man; and now he, too, would go to the Devil — that was the boy in him. So he put his head down on the green oil-cloth table-cover, and wept before resigning his post and all it offered.

But the reward of his services came. He was given three days to reconsider himself, and the Head of the establishment, after some telegraphings, said that it was a most unusual step, but, in view of the ability that Mr. Hatt had displayed at such and such a time, at such and such junctures, he was in a position to offer him an infinitely superior post — first on probation and later, in the natural course of things, on confirmation. “And how much does the post carry?” said Dicky. “Six hundred and fifty rupees,” said the Head slowly, expecting to see the young man sink with gratitude and joy.

And it came then! The seven-hundred-rupee passage, and enough to have saved the wife, and the little son, and to have allowed of assured and open marriage, came then. Dicky burst into a roar of laughter — laughter he could not check —

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nasty, jangling merriment that seemed as if it would go on for ever. When he had recovered himself he said, quite seriously, "I'm tired of work. I'm an old man now. It's about time I retired. And I will."

"The boy's mad!" said the Head.

I think he was right; but Dicky Hatt never reappeared to settle the question.

## PIG

Go, stalk the red deer o'er the heather,  
Ride, follow the fox if you can !  
But, for pleasure and profit together,  
Allow me the hunting of Man,—  
The chase of the Human, the search for the Soul  
To its ruin,—the hunting of Man.

*The Old Shikarri.*

I BELIEVE the difference began in the matter of a horse, with a twist in his temper, whom Pinecoffin sold to Nafferton and by whom Nafferton was nearly slain. There may have been other causes of offense ; the horse was the official stalking-horse. Nafferton was very angry ; but Pinecoffin laughed, and said that he had never guaranteed the beast's manners. Nafferton laughed too, though he vowed that he would write off his fall against Pinecoffin if he waited five years. Now, a Dalesman from beyond Skipton will forgive an injury when the Strid lets a man live ; but a South Devon man is as soft as a Dartmoor bog. You can see from their names that Nafferton had the race-advantage of Pinecoffin. He was a peculiar man, and his notions of humour were cruel. He taught me a new



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and fascinating form of *sbikar*. He hounded Pinecoffin from Mithankot to Jagadri, and from Gurgaon to Abbottabad — up and across the Punjab, a large Province, and in places remarkably dry. He said that he had no intention of allowing Assistant Commissioners to “sell him pups,” in the shape of ramping, screaming countrybreds, without making their lives a burden to them.

Most Assistant Commissioners develop a bent for some special work after their first hot weather in the country. The boys with digestions hope to write their names large on the Frontier, and struggle for dreary places like Bannu and Kohat. The bilious ones climb into the Secretariat. Which is very bad for the liver. Others are bitten with a mania for District work, Ghuznvide coins or Persian poetry; while some, who come of farmers' stock, find that the smell of the Earth after the Rains gets into their blood, and calls them to “develop the resources of the Province.” These men are enthusiasts. Pinecoffin belonged to their class. He knew a great many facts bearing on the cost of bullocks, and temporary wells, and opium-scrapers, and what happens if you burn too much rubbish on a field in the hope of enriching used-up soil. All the Pinecoffins come of a landholding breed, and so the land only took back her own again. Unfortunately — most unfortunately for Pinecoffin — he was a Civilian as well as a farmer.

Nafferton watched him, and thought about the horse. Nafferton said, "See me chase that boy till he drops!" I said, "You can't get your knife into an Assistant Commissioner." Nafferton told me that I did not understand the administration of the Province.

Our Government is rather peculiar. It gushes on the agricultural and general information side, and will supply a moderately respectable man with all sorts of "economic statistics," if he speaks to it prettily. For instance, you are interested in gold-washing in the sands of the Sutlej. You pull the string, and find that it wakes up half a dozen Departments, and finally communicates, say, with a friend of yours in the Telegraph, who once wrote some notes on the customs of the gold-washers when he was on construction work in their part of the Empire. He may or may not be pleased at being ordered to write out everything he knows for your benefit. This depends on his temperament. The bigger man you are, the more information and the greater trouble can you raise.

Nafferton was not a big man; but he had the reputation of being very "earnest." An "earnest" man can do much with a Government. There was an earnest man once who nearly wrecked . . . but all India knows *that* story. I am not sure what real "earnestness" is. A very fair imitation can be manufactured by neglecting to dress de-

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cently, by mooning about in a dreamy, misty sort of way, by taking office-work home after staying in office till seven, and by receiving crowds of native gentlemen on Sundays. That is one sort of "earnestness."

Nafferton cast about for a peg whereon to hang his earnestness, and for a string that would communicate with Pinecoffin. He found both. They were Pig. Nafferton became an earnest inquirer after Pig. He informed the Government that he had a scheme whereby a very large percentage of the British Army in India could be fed, at a very large saving, on Pig. Then he hinted that Pinecoffin might supply him with the "varied information necessary to the proper inception of the scheme." So the Government wrote on the back of the letter, "Instruct Mr. Pinecoffin to furnish Mr. Nafferton with any information in his power." Government is very prone to writing things on the backs of letters which, later, lead to trouble and confusion.

Nafferton had not the faintest interest in Pig, but he knew that Pinecoffin would flounce into the trap. Pinecoffin was delighted at being consulted about Pig. The Indian Pig is not exactly an important factor in agricultural life; but Nafferton explained to Pinecoffin that there was room for improvement, and corresponded direct with that young man.

## PIG

You may think that there is not much to be evolved from Pig. It all depends how you set to work. Pinecoffin, being a Civilian and wishing to do things thoroughly, began with an essay on the Primitive Pig, the Mythology of the Pig, and the Dravidian Pig. Nafferton filed that information — twenty-seven foolscap sheets — and wanted to know about the distribution of the Pig in the Punjab, and how it stood the Plains in the hot weather. From this point onwards remember that I am giving you only the barest outlines of the affair — the guy-ropes, as it were, of the web that Nafferton spun round Pinecoffin.

Pinecoffin made a coloured Pig-population map, and collected observations on the comparative longevity of Pig (*a*) in the sub-montane tracts of the Himalayas, and (*b*) in the Rechna Doab. Nafferton filed that, and asked what sort of people looked after Pig. This started an ethnological excursus on swineherds, and drew from Pinecoffin long tables showing the proportion per thousand of the caste in the Derajat. Nafferton filed that bundle, and explained that the figures which he wanted referred to the Cis-Sutlej states, where he understood that Pigs were very fine and large, and where he proposed to start a Piggery. By this time, Government had quite forgotten their instructions to Mr. Pinecoffin. They were like the gentlemen, in Keats' poem, who turned well-oiled

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wheels to skin other people. But Pinecoffin was just entering into the spirit of the Pig-hunt, as Nafferton well knew he would do. He had a fair amount of work of his own to clear away; but he sat up of nights reducing Pig to five places of decimals for the honour of his Service. He was not going to appear ignorant of so easy a subject as Pig.

Then Government sent him on special duty to Kohat, to "inquire into" the big, seven-foot iron-shod spades of that District. People had been killing each other with those peaceful tools; and Government wished to know "whether a modified form of agricultural implement could not, tentatively and as a temporary measure, be introduced among the agricultural population without needlessly or unduly exacerbating the existing religious sentiments of the peasantry."

Between those spades and Nafferton's Pig, Pinecoffin was rather heavily burdened.

Nafferton now began to take up "(a) The food-supply of the indigenous Pig, with a view to the improvement of its capacities as a flesh-former. (b) The acclimatisation of the exotic Pig, maintaining its distinctive peculiarities." Pinecoffin replied exhaustively that the exotic Pig would become merged in the indigenous type; and quoted horse-breeding statistics to prove this. The side-issue was debated, at great length on

## PIG

Pinecoffin's side, till Nafferton owned that he had been in the wrong, and moved the previous question. When Pinecoffin had quite written himself out about flesh-formers, and fibrins, and glucose, and the nitrogenous constituents of maize and lucerne, Nafferton raised the question of expense. By this time Pinecoffin, who had been transferred from Kohat, had developed a Pig theory of his own, which he stated in thirty-three folio pages—all carefully filed by Nafferton. Who asked for more.

These things took ten months, and Pinecoffin's interest in the potential Piggery seemed to die down after he had stated his own views. But Nafferton bombarded him with letters on "the Imperial aspect of the scheme, as tending to officialise the sale of pork, and thereby calculated to give offence to the Mahommedan population of Upper India." He guessed that Pinecoffin would want some broad, free-hand work after his niggling, stippling, decimal details. Pinecoffin handled the latest development of the case in masterly style, and proved that no "popular ebullition of excitement was to be apprehended." Nafferton said that there was nothing like Civilian insight in matters of this kind, and lured him up a by-path—"the possible profits to accrue to the Government from the sale of hog-bristles." There is an extensive literature of hog-bristles, and the shoe, brush, and colour-man's trades recognise more va



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rieties of bristles than you would think possible. After Pinecoffin had wondered a little at Nafferton's rage for information, he sent back a monograph, fifty-one pages, on "Products of the Pig." This led him, under Nafferton's tender handling, straight to the Cawnpore factories, the trade in hog-skin for saddles — and thence to the tanners. Pinecoffin wrote that pomegranate-seed was the best cure for hog-skin, and suggested — for the past fourteen months had wearied him — that Nafferton should "raise his pigs before he tanned them."

Nafferton went back to the second section of his fifth question. How could the exotic Pig be brought to give as much pork as it did in the West and yet "assume the essentially hirsute characteristics of its Oriental congener"? Pinecoffin felt dazed, for he had forgotten what he had written sixteen months before, and fancied that he was about to reopen the entire question. He was too far involved in the hideous tangle to retreat, and, in a weak moment, he wrote, "Consult my first letter." Which related to the Dravidian Pig. As a matter of fact, Pinecoffin had still to reach the acclimatisation stage; having gone off on a side-issue on the merging of types.

*Then* Nafferton really unmasked his batteries! He complained to the Government, in stately language, of "the paucity of help accorded to me in



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my earnest attempts to start a potentially remunerative industry, and the flippancy with which my requests for information are treated by a gentleman whose pseudo-scholarly attainments should at least have taught him the primary differences between the Dravidian and the Berkshire variety of the genus *Sus*. If I am to understand that the letter to which he refers me contains his serious views on the acclimatisation of a valuable, though possibly uncleanly, animal, I am reluctantly compelled to believe," etc. etc.

There was a new man at the head of the Department of Castigation. The wretched Pinecoffin was told that the Service was made for the Country, and not the Country for the Service, and that he had better begin to supply information about Pigs.

Pinecoffin answered insanely that he had written everything that could be written about Pig, and that some furlough was due to him.

Nafferton got a copy of that letter, and sent it, with the essay on the Dravidian Pig, to a down-country paper which printed both in full. The essay was rather high-flown; but if the Editor had seen the stacks of paper, in Pinecoffin's handwriting, on Nafferton's table, he would not have been so sarcastic about the "nebulous discursiveness and blatant self-sufficiency of the modern Competition-wallah, and his utter inability to grasp the practi-

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cal issues of a practical question." Many friends cut out these remarks and sent them to Pinecoffin.

I have already stated that Pinecoffin came of a soft stock. This last stroke frightened and shook him. He could not understand it; but he felt that he had been, somehow, shamelessly betrayed by Nafferton. He realised that he had wrapped himself up in the Pig-skin without need, and that he could not well set himself right with his Government. All his acquaintances asked after his "nebulous discursiveness" or his "blatant self-sufficiency," and this made him miserable.

He took a train and went to Nafferton, whom he had not seen since the Pig business began. He also took the cutting from the paper, and blustered feebly and called Nafferton names, and then died down to a watery, weak protest of the "I-say-it's-too-bad-you-know" order.

Nafferton was very sympathetic.

"I'm afraid I've given you a good deal of trouble, haven't I?" said he.

"Trouble!" whimpered Pinecoffin; "I don't mind the trouble so much, though that was bad enough; but what I resent is this showing up in print. It will stick to me like a burr all through my service. And I *did* do my best for your interminable swine. It's too bad of you — on my soul it is!"

"I don't know," said Nafferton. "Have you

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ever been stuck with a horse? It isn't the money I mind, though that is bad enough; but what I resent is the chaff that follows, especially from the boy who stuck me. But I think we'll cry quits now."

Pinecoffin found nothing to say save bad words; and Nafferton smiled ever so sweetly, and asked him to dinner.

## THE ROUT OF THE WHITE HUSSARS

It was not in the open fight  
We threw away the sword,  
But in the lonely watching  
In the darkness by the ford.  
The waters lapped, the night-wind blew,  
Full-armed the Fear was born and grew,  
And we were flying ere we knew  
From panic in the night.

*Beoni Bar.*

SOME people hold that an English Cavalry regiment cannot run. This is a mistake. I have seen four hundred and thirty-seven sabres flying over the face of the country in abject terror—have seen the best Regiment that ever drew bridle wiped off the Army List for the space of two hours. If you repeat this tale to the White Hussars they will, in all probability, treat you severely. They are not proud of the incident.

You may know the White Hussars by their “side,” which is greater than that of all the Cavalry Regiments on the roster. If this is not a sufficient mark, you may know them by their old brandy. It has been sixty years in the Mess,

## ROUT OF THE WHITE HUSSARS

and is worth going far to taste. Ask for the "McGaire" old brandy, and see that you get it. If the Mess Sergeant thinks that you are uneducated, and that the genuine article will be lost on you, he will treat you accordingly. He is a good man. But, when you are at Mess, you must never talk to your hosts about forced marches or long-distance rides. The Mess are very sensitive; and, if they think that you are laughing at them, will tell you so.

As the White Hussars say, it was all the Colonel's fault. He was a new man, and he ought never to have taken the Command. He said that the Regiment was not smart enough. This to the White Hussars, who knew that they could walk round any Horse and through any Guns and over any Foot on the face of the earth! That insult was the first cause of offence.

Then the Colonel cast the Drum-Horse — the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars! Perhaps you do not see what an unspeakable crime he had committed. I will try to make it clear. The soul of the Regiment lives in the Drum-Horse who carries the silver kettle-drums. He is nearly always a big piebald Waler. That is a point of honour; and a Regiment will spend anything you please on a piebald. He is beyond the ordinary laws of casting. His work is very light, and he only manœuvres at a footpace. Wherefore, so

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long as he can step out and look handsome, his wellbeing is assured. He knows more about the Regiment than the Adjutant, and could not make a mistake if he tried.

The Drum-Horse of the White Hussars was only eighteen years old, and perfectly equal to his duties. He had at least six years' more work in him, and carried himself with all the pomp and dignity of a Drum-Major of the Guards. The Regiment had paid Rs.1200 for him.

But the Colonel said that he must go, and he was cast in due form and replaced by a washy, bay beast, as ugly as a mule, with a ewe-neck, rat-tail, and cow-hocks. The Drummer detested that animal, and the best of the Band-horses put back their ears and showed the whites of their eyes at the very sight of him. They knew him for an up-start and no gentleman. I fancy that the Colonel's ideas of smartness extended to the Band, and that he wanted to make it take part in the regular parade movements. A Cavalry Band is a sacred thing. It only turns out for Commanding Officers' parades, and the Band-Master is one degree more important than the Colonel. He is a High Priest, and the "Keel Row" is his holy song. The "Keel Row" is the Cavalry Trot; and the man who has never heard that tune rising, high and shrill, above the rattle of the Regiment going past the saluting-base, has something yet to hear and understand.

## ROUT OF THE WHITE HUSSARS

When the Colonel cast the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars, there was nearly a mutiny.

The officers were angry, the Regiment were furious, and the Bandsmen swore — like troopers. The Drum-Horse was going to be put up to auction — public auction — to be bought, perhaps, by a Parsee and put into a cart ! It was worse than exposing the inner life of the Regiment to the whole world, or selling the Mess Plate to a Jew — a Black Jew.

The Colonel was a mean man and a bully. He knew what the Regiment thought about his action ; and, when the troopers offered to buy the Drum-Horse, he said that their offer was mutinous and forbidden by the Regulations.

But one of the Subalterns — Hogan-Yale, an Irishman — bought the Drum-Horse for Rs.160 at the sale : and the Colonel was wroth. Yale professed repentance — he was unnaturally submissive — and said that, as he had only made the purchase to save the horse from possible ill-treatment and starvation, he would now shoot him and end the business. This appeared to soothe the Colonel, for he wanted the Drum-Horse disposed of. He felt that he had made a mistake, and could not, of course, acknowledge it. Meantime, the presence of the Drum-Horse was an annoyance to him.

Yale took to himself a glass of the old brandy, three cheroots, and his friend Martyn ; and they



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all left the Mess together. Yale and Martyn conferred for two hours in Yale's quarters; but only the bull-terrier who keeps watch over Yale's boot-trees knows what they said. A horse, hooded and sheeted to his ears, left Yale's stables and was taken, very unwillingly, into the Civil Lines. Yale's groom went with him. Two men broke into the Regimental Theatre and took several paint-pots and some large scenery-brushes. Then night fell over the Cantonments, and there was a noise as of a horse kicking his loose-box to pieces in Yale's stables. Yale had a big, old, white Waler trap-horse.

The next day was a Thursday, and the men, hearing that Yale was going to shoot the Drum-Horse in the evening, determined to give the beast a regular regimental funeral—a finer one than they would have given the Colonel had he died just then. They got a bullock-cart and some sacking, and mounds and mounds of roses, and the body, under sacking, was carried out to the place where the anthrax cases were cremated; two-thirds of the Regiment following. There was no Band, but they all sang “The Place where the old Horse died” as something respectful and appropriate to the occasion. When the corpse was dumped into the grave and the men began throwing down armfuls of roses to cover it, the Farrier-Sergeant ripped out an oath and said aloud,

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“Why, it ain’t the Drum-Horse any more than it’s me!” The Troop Sergeant-Majors asked him whether he had left his head in the Canteen. The Farrier-Sergeant said that he knew the Drum-Horse’s feet as well as he knew his own; but he was silenced when he saw the regimental number burnt in on the poor stiff, upturned near-fore.

Thus was the Drum-Horse of the White Hussars buried; the Farrier-Sergeant grumbling. The sacking that covered the corpse was smeared in places with black paint; and the Farrier-Sergeant drew attention to this fact. But the Troop-Sergeant-Major of E Troop kicked him severely on the shin, and told him that he was undoubtedly drunk.

On the Monday following the burial, the Colonel sought revenge on the White Hussars. Unfortunately, being at that time temporarily in command of the Station, he ordered a Brigade field-day. He said that he wished to make the Regiment “sweat for their damned insolence,” and he carried out his notion thoroughly. That Monday was one of the hardest days in the memory of the White Hussars. They were thrown against a skeleton-enemy, and pushed forward, and withdrawn, and dismounted, and “scientifically handled” in every possible fashion over dusty country, till they sweated profusely. Their only amusement came late in the day when they fell

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upon the battery of Horse Artillery and chased it for two miles. This was a personal question, and most of the troopers had money on the event; the Gunners saying openly that they had the legs of the White Hussars. They were wrong. A march-past concluded the campaign, and when the Regiment got back to their Lines, the men were coated with dirt from spur to chin-strap.

The White Hussars have one great and peculiar privilege. They won it at Fontenoy, I think.

Many Regiments possess special rights such as wearing collars with undress uniform, or a bow of riband between the shoulders, or red and white roses in their helmets on certain days of the year. Some rights are connected with regimental saints, and some with regimental successes. All are valued highly; but none so highly as the right of the White Hussars to have the Band playing when their horses are being watered in the Lines. Only one tune is played, and that tune never varies. I don't know its real name, but the White Hussars call it, "Take me to London again." It sounds very pretty. The Regiment would sooner be struck off the roster than forego their distinction.

After the "dismiss" was sounded, the officers rode off home to prepare for stables; and the men filed into the Lines, riding easy. That is to say, they opened their tight buttons, shifted their hel-

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mets, and began to joke or to swear, as the humour took them; the more careful slipping off and easing girths and curbs. A good trooper values his mount exactly as much as he values himself, and believes, or should believe, that the two together are irresistible where women or men, girls or guns, are concerned.

Then the Orderly-Officer gave the order, "Water horses," and the Regiment loafed off to the squadron-troughs which were in rear of the stables and between these and the barracks. There were four huge troughs, one for each squadron, arranged *en échelon*, so that the whole Regiment could water in ten minutes if it liked. But it lingered for seventeen, as a rule, while the Band played.

The Band struck up as the squadrons filed off to the troughs, and the men slipped their feet out of the stirrups and chaffed each other. The sun was just setting in a big, hot bed of red cloud, and the road to the Civil Lines seemed to run straight into the sun's eye. There was a little dot on the road. It grew and grew till it showed as a horse with a sort of gridiron-thing on his back. The red cloud glared through the bars of the gridiron. Some of the troopers shaded their eyes with their hands and said — "What the mischief 'as that there 'orse got on 'im?"

In another minute they heard a neigh that every

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soul — horse and man — in the Regiment knew, and saw, heading straight towards the Band, the dead Drum-Horse of the White Hussars!

On his withers banged and bumped the kettle-drums draped in crape, and on his back, very stiff and soldierly, sat a bareheaded skeleton.

The Band stopped playing, and, for a moment, there was a hush.

Then some one in E Troop — men said it was the Troop-Sergeant-Major — swung his horse round and yelled. No one can account exactly for what happened afterwards; but it seems that, at least, one man in each troop set an example of panic, and the rest followed like sheep. The horses that had barely put their muzzles into the troughs reared and capered; but as soon as the Band broke, which it did when the ghost of the Drum-Horse was about a furlong distant, all hooves followed suit, and the clatter of the stampede — quite different from the orderly throb and roar of a movement on parade, or the rough horse-play of watering in camp — made them only more terrified. They felt that the men on their backs were afraid of something. When horses once know that, all is over except the butchery.

Troop after troop turned from the troughs and ran — anywhere and everywhere — like spilt quicksilver. It was a most extraordinary spectacle, for men and horses were in all stages of easiness, and

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the carbine-buckets flopping against their sides urged the horses on. Men were shouting and cursing, and trying to pull clear of the Band, which was being chased by the Drum-Horse, whose rider had fallen forward and seemed to be spurring for a wager.

The Colonel had gone over to the Mess for a drink. Most of the officers were with him, and the Subaltern of the Day was preparing to go down to the Lines and receive the watering reports from the Troop-Sergeant-Majors. When "Take me to London again" stopped, after twenty bars, every one in the Mess said, "What on earth has happened?" A minute later, they heard unmilitary noises, and saw, far across the plain, the White Hussars scattered, and broken, and flying.

The Colonel was speechless with rage, for he thought that the Regiment had risen against him or was unanimously drunk. The Band, a disorganised mob, tore past, and at its heels laboured the Drum-Horse—the dead and buried Drum-Horse—with the jolting, clattering skeleton. Hogan-Yale whispered softly to Martyn—"No wire will stand that treatment," and the Band, which had doubled like a hare, came back again. But the rest of the Regiment was gone, was rioting all over the Province, for the dusk had shut in and each man was howling to his neighbour that the Drum-Horse was on his flank. Troop-horses



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are far too tenderly treated as a rule. They can, on emergencies, do a great deal, even with seventeen stone on their backs. As the troopers found out.

How long this panic lasted I cannot say. I believe that when the moon rose the men saw they had nothing to fear, and, by twos and threes and half-troops, crept back into Cantonments, very much ashamed of themselves. Meantime, the Drum-Horse, disgusted at his treatment by old friends, pulled up, wheeled round, and trotted up to the Mess verandah-steps for bread. No one liked to run; but no one cared to go forward till the Colonel made a movement and laid hold of the skeleton's foot. The Band had halted some distance away, and now came back slowly. The Colonel called it, individually and collectively, every evil name that occurred to him at the time; for he had set his hand on the bosom of the Drum-Horse and found flesh and blood. Then he beat the kettle-drums with his clenched fist, and discovered that they were but made of silvered paper and bamboo. Next, still swearing, he tried to drag the skeleton out of the saddle, but found that it had been wired into the cantle. The sight of the Colonel, with his arms round the skeleton's pelvis and his knee in the old Drum-Horse's stomach, was striking. Not to say amusing. He worried the thing off in a minute or two, and threw it down on the ground, saying to the Band---



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“Here, you curs, that’s what you’re afraid of.” The skeleton did not look pretty in the twilight. The Band-Sergeant seemed to recognise it, for he began to chuckle and choke. “Shall I take it away, Sir?” said the Band-Sergeant. “Yes,” said the Colonel, “take it to Hell, and ride there yourselves!”

The Band-Sergeant saluted, hoisted the skeleton across his saddle-bow, and led off to the stables. Then the Colonel began to make inquiries for the rest of the Regiment, and the language he used was wonderful. He would disband the Regiment—he would court-martial every soul in it—he would not command such a set of rabble, and so on, and so on. As the men dropped in, his language grew wilder, until at last it exceeded the utmost limits of free speech allowed even to a Colonel of Horse.

Martyn took Hogan-Yale aside and suggested compulsory retirement from the Service as a necessity when all was discovered. Martyn was the weaker man of the two. Hogan-Yale put up his eyebrows and remarked, firstly, that he was the son of a Lord, and, secondly, that he was as innocent as the babe unborn of the theatrical resurrection of the Drum-Horse.

“My instructions,” said Yale, with a singularly sweet smile, “were that the Drum-Horse should be sent back as impressively as possible. I ask you,

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*am* I responsible if a mule-headed friend sends him back in such a manner as to disturb the peace of mind of a regiment of Her Majesty's Cavalry?"

Martyn said, "You are a great man, and will in time become a General; but I'd give my chance of a troop to be safe out of this affair."

Providence saved Martyn and Hogan-Yale. The Second-in-Command led the Colonel away to the little curtained alcove wherein the Subalterns of the White Hussars were accustomed to play poker of nights; and there, after many oaths on the Colonel's part, they talked together in low tones. I fancy that the Second-in-Command must have represented the scare as the work of some trooper whom it would be hopeless to detect; and I know that he dwelt upon the sin and the shame of making a public laughing-stock of the scare.

"They will call us," said the Second-in-Command, who had really a fine imagination—"they will call us the 'Fly-by-Nights'; they will call us the 'Ghost-Hunters'; they will nickname us from one end of the Army List to the other. All the explanation in the world won't make outsiders understand that the officers were away when the panic began. For the honour of the Regiment and for your own sake keep this thing quiet."

The Colonel was so exhausted with anger that soothing him down was not so difficult as might be imagined. He was made to see, gently and by

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degrees, that it was obviously impossible to court-martial the whole Regiment and equally impossible to proceed against any subaltern who, in his belief, had any concern in the hoax.

“But the beast’s alive! He’s never been shot at all!” shouted the Colonel. “It’s flat, flagrant disobedience! I’ve known a man broke for less—dam sight less. They’re mocking me, I tell you, Mutman! They’re mocking me!”

Once more, the Second-in-Command set himself to soothe the Colonel, and wrestled with him for half an hour. At the end of that time, the Regimental Sergeant-Major reported himself. The situation was rather novel to him; but he was not a man to be put out by circumstances. He saluted and said, “Regiment all come back, Sir.” Then, to propitiate the Colonel—“An’ none of the ’orses any the worse, Sir.”

The Colonel only snorted and answered—“You’d better tuck the men into their cots, then, and see that they don’t wake up and cry in the night.” The Sergeant withdrew.

His little stroke of humour pleased the Colonel, and, further, he felt slightly ashamed of the language he had been using. The Second-in-Command worried him again, and the two sat talking far into the night.

Next day but one, there was a Commanding Officer’s parade, and the Colonel harangued the

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White Hussars vigorously. The pith of his speech was that, since the Drum-Horse in his old age had proved himself capable of cutting up the whole Regiment, he should return to his post of pride at the head of the Band, *but* the Regiment were a set of ruffians with bad consciences.

The White Hussars shouted, and threw everything movable about them into the air, and when the parade was over they cheered the Colonel till they couldn't speak. No cheers were put up for Lieutenant Hogan-Yale, who smiled very sweetly in the background.

Said the Second-in-Command to the Colonel, unofficially—

“These little things ensure popularity, and do not the least affect discipline.”

“But I went back on my word,” said the Colonel.

“Never mind,” said the Second-in-Command. “The White Hussars will follow you anywhere from to-day. Regiments are just like women. They will do anything for trinketry.”

A week later, Hogan-Yale received an extraordinary letter from some one who signed himself “Secretary, *Charity and Zeal*, 3709, E. C.,” and asked for “the return of our skeleton which we have reason to believe is in your possession.”

“Who the deuce is this lunatic who trades in bones?” said Hogan-Yale.

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“Beg your pardon, Sir,” said the Band-Sergeant, “but the skeleton is with me, an’ I’ll return it if you’ll pay the carriage into the Civil Lines. There’s a coffin with it, Sir.”

Hogan-Yale smiled and handed two rupees to the Band-Sergeant, saying, “Write the date on the skull, will you?”

If you doubt this story, and know where to go, you can see the date on the skeleton. But don’t mention the matter to the White Hussars.

I happen to know something about it, because I prepared the Drum-Horse for his resurrection. He did not take kindly to the skeleton at all.

## THE BRONCKHORST DIVORCE-CASE

In the daytime, when she moved about me,  
In the night, when she was sleeping at my side,—  
I was wearied, I was wearied of her presence,  
Day by day and night by night I grew to hate her —  
Would God that she or I had died!

*Confessions.*

THERE was a man called Bronckhorst — a three-cornered, middle-aged man in the Army — gray as a badger, and, some people said, with a touch of country-blood in him. That, however, cannot be proved. Mrs. Bronckhorst was not exactly young, though fifteen years younger than her husband. She was a large, pale, quiet woman, with heavy eyelids over weak eyes, and hair that turned red or yellow as the lights fell on it.

Bronckhorst was not nice in any way. He had no respect for the pretty public and private lies that make life a little less nasty than it is. His manner towards his wife was coarse. There are many things — including actual assault with the clenched fist — that a wife will endure; but seldom a wife can bear — as Mrs. Bronckhorst bore — with a long course of brutal, hard chaff, making

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light of her weaknesses, her headaches, her small fits of gaiety, her dresses, her queer little attempts to make herself attractive to her husband when she knows that she is not what she has been, and — worst of all — the love that she spends on her children. That particular sort of heavy-handed jest was specially dear to Bronckhorst. I suppose that he had first slipped into it, meaning no harm, in the honeymoon, when folk find their ordinary stock of endearments run short, and so go to the other extreme to express their feelings. A similar impulse makes a man say, “Hutt, you old beast!” when a favourite horse nuzzles his coat-front. Unluckily, when the reaction of marriage sets in, the form of speech remains, and, the tenderness having died out, hurts the wife more than she cares to say. But Mrs. Bronckhorst was devoted to her “Teddy,” as she called him. Perhaps that was why he objected to her. Perhaps — this is only a theory to account for his infamous behaviour later on — he gave way to the queer, savage feeling that sometimes takes by the throat a husband twenty years married, when he sees, across the table, the same same face of his wedded wife, and knows that, as he has sat facing it, so must he continue to sit until the day of its death or his own. Most men and all women know the spasm. It only lasts for three breaths as a rule, must be a “throw-back” to times when men and women



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were rather worse than they are now, and is too unpleasant to be discussed.

Dinner at the Bronckhorsts' was an infliction few men cared to undergo. Bronckhorst took a pleasure in saying things that made his wife wince. When their little boy came in at dessert, Bronckhorst used to give him half a glass of wine, and, naturally enough, the poor little mite got first riotous, next miserable, and was removed screaming. Bronckhorst asked if that was the way Teddy usually behaved, and whether Mrs. Bronckhorst could not spare some of her time "to teach the little beggar decency." Mrs. Bronckhorst, who loved the boy more than her own life, tried not to cry — her spirit seemed to have been broken by her marriage. Lastly, Bronckhorst used to say, "There! That'll do, that'll do. For God's sake try to behave like a rational woman. Go into the drawing-room." Mrs. Bronckhorst would go, trying to carry it all off with a smile; and the guest of the evening would feel angry and uncomfortable.

After three years of this cheerful life — for Mrs. Bronckhorst had no women-friends to talk to — the Station was startled by the news that Bronckhorst had instituted proceedings *on the criminal count* against a man called Biel, who certainly had been rather attentive to Mrs. Bronckhorst whenever she had appeared in public. The utter want of reserve with which Bronckhorst treated his own

## THE BRONCKHORST DIVORCE-CASE

dishonour helped us to know that the evidence against Biel would be entirely circumstantial and native. There were no letters; but Bronckhorst said openly that he would rack Heaven and Earth until he saw Biel superintending the manufacture of carpets in the Central Jail. Mrs. Bronckhorst kept entirely to her house, and let charitable folks say what they pleased. Opinions were divided. Some two-thirds of the Station jumped at once to the conclusion that Biel was guilty; but a dozen men who knew and liked him held by him. Biel was furious and surprised. He denied the whole thing, and vowed that he would thrash Bronckhorst within an inch of his life. No jury, we knew, would convict a man on the criminal count on native evidence in a land where you can buy a murder-charge, including the corpse, all complete for fifty-four rupees; but Biel did not care to scrape through by the benefit of a doubt. He wanted the whole thing cleared; but, as he said one night — “He can prove anything with servants’ evidence, and I’ve only my bare word.” This was almost a month before the case came on; and beyond agreeing with Biel, we could do little. All that we could be sure of was that the native evidence would be bad enough to blast Biel’s character for the rest of his service; for when a native begins perjury he perjures himself thoroughly. He does not boggle over details.

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Some genius at the end of the table whereat the affair was being talked over, said, "Look here! I don't believe lawyers are any good. Get a man to wire to Strickland, and beg him to come down and pull us through."

Strickland was about a hundred and eighty miles up the line. He had not long been married to Miss Youghal, but he scented in the telegram a chance of return to the old detective work that his soul lusted after, and next night he came in and heard our story. He finished his pipe and said oracularly, "We must get at the evidence. *Oorya* bearer, Mussulman *kbit* and sweeper *ayah*, I suppose, are the pillars of the charge. I am on in this piece; but I'm afraid I'm getting rusty in my talk."

He rose and went into Biel's bedroom, where his trunk had been put, and shut the door. An hour later, we heard him say, "I hadn't the heart to part with my old make-ups when I married. Will this do?" There was a loathsome *faqir* salaaming in the doorway.

"Now lend me fifty rupees," said Strickland, "and give me your Words of Honour that you won't tell my wife."

He got all that he asked for, and left the house while the table drank his health. What he did only he himself knows. A *faqir* hung about Bronckhorst's compound for twelve days. Then

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a sweeper appeared, and when Biel heard of *him*, he said that Strickland was an angel full-fledged. Whether the sweeper made love to Janki, Mrs. Bronckhorst's *ayah*, is a question which concerns Strickland exclusively.

He came back at the end of three weeks, and said quietly, "You spoke the truth, Biel. The whole business is put up from beginning to end. 'Jove! It almost astonishes *me*! That Bronckhorst-beast isn't fit to live."

There was uproar and shouting, and Biel said, "How are you going to prove it? You can't say that you've been trespassing on Bronckhorst's compound in disguise!"

"No," said Strickland. "Tell your lawyer-fool, whoever he is, to get up something strong about 'inherent improbabilities' and 'discrepancies of evidence.' He won't have to speak, but it will make him happy. *I'm* going to run this business."

Biel held his tongue, and the other men waited to see what would happen. They trusted Strickland as men trust quiet men. When the case came off the Court was crowded. Strickland hung about in the verandah of the Court till he met the Mohammedan *kbitmatgar*. Then he murmured a *faqir's* blessing in his ear, and asked him how his second wife did. The man spun round, and, as he looked into the eyes of "Estreeken Sahib," his jaw dropped. You must remember that before

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Strickland was married he was, as I have told you already, a power among natives. Strickland whispered a rather coarse vernacular proverb to the effect that he was abreast of all that was going on and went into the Court armed with a gut trainer's-whip.

The Mohammedan was the first witness, and Strickland beamed upon him from the back of the Court. The man moistened his lips with his tongue and, in his abject fear of "Estreeken Sahib" the *faqir*, went back on every detail of his evidence — said he was a poor man and God was his witness that he had forgotten everything that Bronckhorst Sahib had told him to say. Between his terror of Strickland, the Judge, and Bronckhorst he collapsed weeping.

Then began the panic among the witnesses. Janki, the *ayab*, leering chastely behind her veil, turned gray, and the bearer left the Court. He said that his Mamma was dying, and that it was not wholesome for any man to lie unthriftilly in the presence of "Estreeken Sahib."

Biel said politely to Bronckhorst, "Your witnesses don't seem to work. Haven't you any forged letters to produce?" But Bronckhorst was swaying to and fro in his chair, and there was a dead pause after Biel had been called to order.

Bronckhorst's Counsel saw the look on his client's face, and without more ado pitched his

## THE BRONCKHORST DIVORCE-CASE

papers on the little green baize table, and mumbled something about having been misinformed. The whole court applauded wildly, like soldiers at a theatre, and the Judge began to say what he thought.

. . . . .

Biel came out of the Court, and Strickland dropped a gut trainer's-whip in the verandah. Ten minutes later, Biel was cutting Bronckhorst into ribbons behind the old Court cells, quietly and without scandal. What was left of Bronckhorst was sent home in a carriage; and his wife wept over it and nursed it into a man again.

Later on, after Biel had managed to hush up the counter-charge against Bronckhorst of fabricating false evidence, Mrs. Bronckhorst, with her faint watery smile, said that there had been a mistake, but it wasn't her Teddy's fault altogether. She would wait till her Teddy came back to her. Perhaps he had grown tired of her, or she had tried his patience, and perhaps we wouldn't cut her any more, and perhaps the mothers would let their children play with "little Teddy" again. He was so lonely. Then the Station invited Mrs. Bronckhorst everywhere, until Bronckhorst was fit to appear in public, when he went Home and took his wife with him. According to latest advices, her Teddy did come back to her, and they are moderately happy. Though, of course, he can never

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

forgive her the thrashing that she was the indirect means of getting for him.

. . . . .  
What Biel wants to know is, "Why didn't I press home the charge against the Bronckhorst-brute, and have him run in?"

What Mrs. Strickland wants to know is, "How *did* my husband bring such a lovely, lovely Waler from your Station. I know *all* his money-affairs; and I'm *certain* he didn't *buy* it."

What I want to know is, "How do women like Mrs. Bronckhorst come to marry men like Bronckhorst?"

And my conundrum is the most unanswerable of the three.



## VENUS ANNODOMINI

And the years went on, as the years must do;  
But our great Diana was always new —  
Fresh, and blooming, and blonde, and fair,  
With azure eyes and with aureate hair;  
And all the folk, as they came or went,  
Offered her praise to her heart's content.

*Diana of Ephesus.*

SHE had nothing to do with Number Eighteen in the Braccio Nuovo of the Vatican, between Visconti's Ceres and the God of the Nile. She was purely an Indian deity — an Anglo-Indian deity, that is to say — and we called her *the* Venus Annodomini, to distinguish her from other Annodominis of the same everlasting order. There was a legend among the Hills that she had once been young; but no living man was prepared to come forward and say boldly that the legend was true. Men rode up to Simla, and stayed, and went away and made their name and did their life's work, and returned again to find the Venus Annodomini exactly as they had left her. She was as immutable as the Hills. But not quite so green. All that a girl of eighteen could do in the way of

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

riding, walking, dancing, picknicking and over-exertion generally, the Venus Annodomini did, and showed no sign of fatigue or trace of weariness. Besides perpetual youth, she had discovered, men said, the secret of perpetual health; and her fame spread about the land. From a mere woman, she grew to be an Institution, in-somuch that no young man could be said to be properly formed who had not, at some time or another, worshipped at the shrine of the Venus Annodomini. There was no one like her, though there were many imitations. Six years in her eyes were no more than six months to ordinary women; and ten made less visible impression on her than does a week's fever on an ordinary woman. Every one adored her, and in return she was pleasant and courteous to nearly every one. Youth had been a habit of hers for so long that she could not part with it—never realised, in fact, the necessity of parting with it—and took for her more chosen associates young people.

Among the worshippers of the Venus Annodomini was young Gayerson. "Very Young Gayerson" he was called, to distinguish him from his father, "Young" Gayerson, a Bengal Civilian, who affected the customs—as he had the heart—of youth. "Very Young" Gayerson was not content to worship placidly and for form's sake, as the other young men did, or to accept a ride or a

## VENUS ANNODOMINI

dance or a talk from the Venus Annodomini in a properly humble and thankful spirit. He was exacting, and, therefore, the Venus Annodomini repressed him. He worried himself nearly sick in a futile sort of way over her; and his devotion and earnestness made him appear either shy or boisterous or rude, as his mood might vary, by the side of the older men who, with him, bowed before the Venus Annodomini. She was sorry for him. He reminded her of a lad who, three-and-twenty years ago, had professed a boundless devotion for her, and for whom in return she had felt something more than a week's weakness. But that lad had fallen away and married another woman less than a year after he had worshipped her; and the Venus Annodomini had almost — not quite — forgotten his name. "Very Young" Gayerson had the same big blue eyes and the same way of pouting his underlip when he was excited or troubled. But the Venus Annodomini checked him sternly none the less. Too much zeal was a thing that she did not approve of; preferring instead a tempered and sober tenderness.

"Very Young" Gayerson was miserable, and took no trouble to conceal his wretchedness. He was in the Army — a Line regiment I think, but am not certain — and, since his face was a looking-glass and his forehead an open book, by reason of his innocence, his brothers-in-arms made his life a

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

burden to him and embittered his naturally sweet disposition. No one except "Very Young" Gayerson, and he never told his views, knew how old "Very Young" Gayerson believed the Venus Annodomini to be. Perhaps he thought her five-and-twenty, or perhaps she told him that she was this age. "Very Young" Gayerson would have forded the Indus in flood to carry her lightest word, and had implicit faith in her. Every one liked him, and every one was sorry when they saw him so bound a slave of the Venus Annodomini. Every one, too, admitted that it was not her fault; for the Venus Annodomini differed from Mrs. Hauksbee and Mrs. Reiver in this particular — she never moved a finger to attract any one; but, like Ninon de L'Enclos, all men were attracted to her. One could admire and respect Mrs. Hauksbee, despise and avoid Mrs. Reiver, but one was forced to adore the Venus Annodomini.

"Very Young" Gayerson's papa held a Division or a Collectorate or something administrative in a particularly unpleasant part of Bengal — full of Babus who edited newspapers proving that "Young" Gayerson was a "Nero" and a "Scylla" and a "Charybdis"; and, in addition to the Babus, there was a good deal of dysentery and cholera abroad for nine months of the year. "Young" Gayerson — he was about five-and-forty — rather liked Babus, they amused him, but he objected to

## VENUS ANNODOMINI

dysentery, and when he could get away, went to Darjiling for the most part. This particular season he fancied that he would come up to Simla and see his boy. The boy was not altogether pleased. He told the Venus Annodomini that his father was coming up, and she flushed a little and said that she should be delighted to make his acquaintance. Then she looked long and thoughtfully at "Very Young" Gayerson, because she was very, very sorry for him, and he was a very, very big idiot.

"My daughter is coming out in a fortnight, Mr. Gayerson," she said.

"Your *what?*" said he.

"Daughter," said the Venus Annodomini. "She's been out for a year at Home already, and I want her to see a little of India. She is nineteen, and a very sensible, nice girl, I believe."

"Very Young" Gayerson, who was a short twenty-two years old, nearly fell out of his chair with astonishment; for he had persisted in believing, against all belief, in the youth of the Venus Annodomini. She, with her back to the curtained window, watched the effect of her sentences and smiled.

"Very Young" Gayerson's papa came up twelve days later, and had not been in Simla four-and-twenty hours, before two men, old acquaintances of his, had told him how "Very Young" Gayerson had been conducting himself.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

“Young” Gayerson laughed a good deal, and inquired who the Venus Annodomini might be. Which proves that he had been living in Bengal, where nobody knows anything except the rate of Exchange. Then he said boys will be boys, and spoke to his son about the matter. “Very Young” Gayerson said that he felt wretched and unhappy; and “Young” Gayerson said that he repented of having helped to bring a fool into the world. He suggested that his son had better cut his leave short and go down to his duties. This led to an unfilial answer, and relations were strained until “Young” Gayerson demanded that they should call on the Venus Annodomini. “Very Young” Gayerson went with his papa, feeling, somehow, uncomfortable and small.

The Venus Annodomini received them graciously, and “Young” Gayerson said, “By Jove! It’s Kitty!” “Very Young” Gayerson would have listened for an explanation if his time had not been taken up with trying to talk to a large, handsome, quiet, well-dressed girl — introduced to him by the Venus Annodomini as her daughter. She was far older in manner, style, and repose than “Very Young” Gayerson; and, as he realised this thing, he felt sick.

Presently he heard the Venus Annodomini saying, “Do you know that your son is one of my most devoted admirers?”



## VENUS ANNODOMINI

"I don't wonder," said "Young" Gayerson. Here he raised his voice. "He follows his father's footsteps. Didn't I worship the ground you trod on, ever so long ago, Kitty—and you haven't changed since then. How strange it all seems!"

"Very Young" Gayerson said nothing. His conversation with the daughter of the Venus Annodomini was, through the rest of the call, fragmentary and disjointed.

. . . . .  
"At five to-morrow, then," said the Venus Annodomini. "And mind you are punctual."

"At five punctually," said "Young" Gayerson. "You can lend your old father a horse, I daresay, youngster, can't you? I'm going for a ride to-morrow afternoon."

"Certainly," said "Very Young" Gayerson. "I am going down to-morrow morning. My ponies are at your service, Sir."

The Venus Annodomini looked at him across the half-light of the room, and her big gray eyes filled with moisture. She rose and shook hands with him.

"Good-bye, Tom," whispered the Venus Annodomini.



## THE BISARA OF POOREE

Little Blind Fish, thou art marvellous wise,  
Little Blind Fish, who put out thy eyes?  
Open thy ears while I whisper my wish —  
Bring me a lover, thou little Blind Fish.

*The Charm of the Bisara.*

SOME natives say that it came from the other side of Kulu, where the eleven-inch Temple Sapphire is. Others that it was made at the Devil-Shrine of Ao-Chung in Thibet, was stolen by a Kafir, from him by a Gurkha, from him again by a Lahouli, from him by a *khitmatgar*, and by this latter sold to an Englishman, so all its virtue was lost; because, to work properly, the Bisara of Pooree must be stolen—with bloodshed if possible, but, at any rate, stolen.

These stories of the coming into India are all false. It was made at Pooree ages since—the manner of its making would fill a small book—was stolen by one of the Temple dancing-girls there, for her own purposes, and then passed on from hand to hand, steadily northward, till it reached Hanlé: always bearing the same name—the Bisara of Pooree. In shape it is a tiny square

## THE BISARA OF POOREE

box of silver, studded outside with eight small balas-rubies. Inside the box, which opens with a spring, is a little eyeless fish, carved from some sort of dark, shiny nut and wrapped in a shred of faded gold cloth. That is the Bisara of Pooree, and it were better for a man to take a king-cobra in his hand than to touch the Bisara of Pooree.

All kinds of magic are out of date and done away with except in India, where nothing changes in spite of the shiny, top-scum stuff that people call "civilization." Any man who knows about the Bisara of Pooree will tell you what its powers are — always supposing that it has been honestly stolen. It is the only regularly working, trustworthy love-charm in the country, with one exception. [The other charm is in the hands of a trooper of the Nizam's Horse, at a place called Tuprani, due north of Hyderabad.] This can be depended upon for a fact. Some one else may explain it.

If the Bisara be not stolen, but given or bought or found, it turns against its owner in three years, and leads to ruin or death. This is another fact which you may explain when you have time. Meanwhile, you can laugh at it. At present the Bisara is safe on a hack-pony's neck, inside the blue bead-necklace that keeps off the Evil-Eye. If the pony-driver ever finds it, and wears it, or gives it to his wife, I am sorry for him.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

A very dirty hill-cooly woman, with goitre, owned it at Theog in 1884. It came into Simla from the north before Churton's *khitmatgar* bought it, and sold it, for three times its silver-value, to Churton, who collected curiosities. The servant knew no more what he had bought than the master; but a man looking over Churton's collection of curiosities — Churton was an Assistant Commissioner, by the way — saw and held his tongue. He was an Englishman; but knew how to believe. Which shows that he was different from most Englishmen. He knew that it was dangerous to have any share in the little box when working or dormant; for Love unsought is a terrible gift.

Pack — "Grubby" Pack, as we used to call him — was, in every way, a nasty little man who must have crawled into the Army by mistake. He was three inches taller than his sword, but not half so strong. And the sword was a fifty-shilling, tailor-made one. Nobody liked him, and, I suppose, it was his wizenedness and worthlessness that made him fall so hopelessly in love with Miss Hollis, who was good and sweet, and five-foot-seven in her tennis-shoes. He was not content with falling in love quietly, but brought all the strength of his miserable little nature into the business. If he had not been so objectionable, one might have pitied him. He vapoured, and fretted, and fumed, and trotted up and down, and

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tried to make himself pleasing in Miss Hollis' big, quiet, gray eyes, and failed. It was one of the cases that you sometimes meet, even in our country where we marry by Code, of a really blind attachment all on one side, without the faintest possibility of return. Miss Hollis looked on Pack as some sort of vermin running about the road. He had no prospects beyond Captain's pay, and no wits to help that out by one penny. In a large-sized man, love like his would have been touching. In a good man it would have been grand. He being what he was, it was only a nuisance.

You will believe this much. What you will not believe is what follows: Churton, and The Man who Knew what the Bisara was, were lunching at the Simla Club together. Churton was complaining of life in general. His best mare had rolled out of stable down the cliff and had broken her back; his decisions were being reversed by the upper Courts more than an Assistant Commissioner of eight years' standing has a right to expect; he knew liver and fever, and, for weeks past, had felt out of sorts. Altogether, he was disgusted and disheartened.

Simla Club dining-room is built, as all the world knows, in two sections, with an arch-arrangement dividing them. Come in, turn to your own left, take the table under the window, and you cannot see any one who has come in, turned to the right,

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

and taken a table on the right side of the arch. Curiously enough, every word that you say can be heard, not only by the other diner, but by the servants beyond the screen through which they bring dinner. This is worth knowing; an echoing-room is a trap to be forewarned against.

Half in fun, and half hoping to be believed, The Man who Knew told Churton the story of the Bisara of Pooree at rather greater length than I have told it to you in this place; winding up with a suggestion that Churton might as well throw the little box down the hill and see whether all his troubles would go with it. In ordinary ears, English ears, the tale was only an interesting bit of folklore. Churton laughed, said that he felt better for his tiffin, and went out. Pack had been tiffining by himself to the right of the arch, and had heard everything. He was nearly mad with his absurd infatuation for Miss Hollis, that all Simla had been laughing about.

It is a curious thing that, when a man hates or loves beyond reason, he is ready to go beyond reason to gratify his feelings. Which he would not do for money or power merely. Depend upon it, Solomon would never have built altars to Ash-taroath and all those ladies with queer names, if there had not been trouble of some kind in his *zenana*, and nowhere else. But this is beside the story. The facts of the case are these: Pack

## THE BISARA OF POOREE

called on Churton next day when Churton was out, left his card, and stole the Bisara of Pooree from its place under the clock on the mantelpiece! Stole it like the thief he was by nature. Three days later all Simla was electrified by the news that Miss Hollis had accepted Pack — the shrivelled rat, Pack! Do you desire clearer evidence than this? The Bisara of Pooree had been stolen, and it worked as it had always done when won by foul means.

There are three or four times in a man's life when he is justified in meddling with other people's affairs to play Providence.

The Man who Knew felt that he was justified; but believing and acting on a belief are quite different things. The insolent satisfaction of Pack as he ambled by the side of Miss Hollis, and Churton's striking release from liver, as soon as the Bisara of Pooree had gone, decided The Man. He explained to Churton, and Churton laughed, because he was not brought up to believe that men on the Government House List steal — at least little things. But the miraculous acceptance by Miss Hollis of that tailor, Pack, decided him to take steps on suspicion. He vowed that he only wanted to find out where his ruby-studded silver box had vanished to. You cannot accuse a man on the Government House List of stealing. And if you rifle his room, you are a thief yourself.



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Churton, prompted by The Man who Knew, decided on burglary. If he found nothing in Pack's room . . . but it is not nice to think of what would have happened in that case.

Pack went to a dance at Benmore—Benmore was Benmore in those days, and not an office—and danced fifteen waltzes out of twenty-two with Miss Hollis. Churton and The Man took all the keys that they could lay hands on, and went to Pack's room in the hotel, certain that his servants would be away. Pack was a cheap soul. He had not purchased a decent cash-box to keep his papers in, but one of those native imitations that you buy for ten rupees. It opened to any sort of key, and there at the bottom, under Pack's Insurance Policy, lay the Bisara of Pooree!

Churton called Pack names, put the Bisara of Pooree in his pocket, and went to the dance with The Man. At least, he came in time for supper, and saw the beginning of the end in Miss Hollis' eyes. She was hysterical after supper, and was taken away by her Mamma.

At the dance, with the abominable Bisara in his pocket, Churton twisted his foot on one of the steps leading down to the old Rink, and had to be sent home in a 'rickshaw, grumbling. He did not believe in the Bisara of Pooree any the more for this manifestation, but he sought out Pack and called him some ugly names; and "thief" was the mildest of them. Pack took the names



## THE BISARA OF POOREE

with the nervous smile of a little man who wants both soul and body to resent an insult, and went his way. There was no public scandal.

A week later, Pack got his definite dismissal from Miss Hollis. There had been a mistake in the placing of her affections, she said. So he went away to Madras, where he can do no great harm even if he lives to be a Colonel.

Churton insisted upon The Man who Knew taking the Bisara of Pooree as a gift. The Man took it, went down to the Cart-Road at once, found a cart-pony with a blue bead-necklace, fastened the Bisara of Pooree inside the necklace with a piece of shoe-string and thanked Heaven that he was rid of a danger. Remember, in case you ever find it, that you must not destroy the Bisara of Pooree. I have not time to explain why just now, but the power lies in the little wooden fish. Mister Gubernatis or Max Müller could tell you more about it than I.

You will say that all this story is made up. Very well. If ever you come across a little, silver, ruby-studded box, seven-eighths of an inch long by three-quarters wide, with a dark-brown wooden fish, wrapped in gold cloth, inside it, keep it. Keep it for three years, and then you will discover for yourself whether my story is true or false.

Better still, steal it as Pack did, and you will be sorry that you had not killed yourself in the beginning.

## A FRIEND'S FRIEND

Wherefore slew you the stranger ? He brought me dishonour,  
I saddled my mare Bijli. I set him upon her.  
I gave him rice and goat's flesh. He bared me to laughter;  
When he was gone from my tent, swift I followed after,  
Taking a sword in my hand. The hot wine had filled him:  
Under the stars he mocked me. Therefore I killed him.

*Hadramauti.*

THIS tale must be told in the first person for many reasons. The man whom I want to expose is Tranter of the Bombay side. I want Tranter black-balled at his Club, divorced from his wife, turned out of Service, and cast into prison, until I get an apology from him in writing. I wish to warn the world against Tranter of the Bombay side.

You know the casual way in which men pass on acquaintances in India ? It is a great convenience, because you can get rid of a man you don't like by writing a letter of introduction and putting him, with it, into the train. T. G.'s are best treated thus. If you keep them moving, they have no time to say insulting and offensive things about "Anglo-Indian Society."

## A FRIEND'S FRIEND

One day, late in the cold weather, I got a letter of preparation from Tranter of the Bombay side, advising me of the advent of a T. G., a man called Jevon; and saying, as usual, that any kindness shown to Jevon would be a kindness to Tranter. Every one knows the regular form of these communications.

Two days afterwards, Jevon turned up with his letter of introduction, and I did what I could for him. He was lint-haired, fresh-coloured, and very English. But he held no views about the Government of India. Nor did he insist on shooting tigers on the Station Mall, as some T. G.'s do. Nor did he call us "colonists," and dine in a flannel-shirt and tweeds, under that delusion, as other T. G.'s do. He was well behaved and very grateful for the little I won for him — most grateful of all when I secured him an invitation for the Afghan Ball, and introduced him to a Mrs. Deemes, a lady for whom I had a great respect and admiration, who danced like the shadow of a leaf in a light wind. I set great store by the friendship of Mrs. Deemes; but, had I known what was coming, I would have broken Jevon's neck with a curtain-pole before getting him that invitation.

But I did not know, and he dined at the Club, I think, on the night of the ball. I dined at home. When I went to the dance, the first man

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I met asked me whether I had seen Jevon. "No," said I. "He's at the Club. Hasn't he come?" "Come!" said the man. "Yes, he's very much come. You'd better look at him."

I sought for Jevon. I found him sitting on a bench and smiling to himself and a programme. Half a look was enough for me. On that one night, of all others, he had begun a long and thirsty evening, by taking too much! He was breathing heavily through his nose, his eyes were rather red, and he appeared very satisfied with all the earth. I put up a little prayer that the waltzing would work off the wine, and went about programme-filling, feeling uncomfortable. But I saw Jevon walk up to Mrs. Deemes for the first dance, and I knew that all the waltzing on the card was not enough to keep Jevon's rebellious legs steady. That couple went round six times. I counted. Mrs. Deemes dropped Jevon's arm and came across to me.

I am not going to repeat what Mrs. Deemes said to me; because she was very angry indeed. I am not going to write what I said to Mrs. Deemes, because I didn't say anything. I only wished that I had killed Jevon first and been hanged for it. Mrs. Deemes drew her pencil through all the dances that I had booked with her, and went away, leaving me to remember that what I ought to have said was that Mrs. Deemes

## A FRIEND'S FRIEND

had asked to be introduced to Jevon because he danced well; and that I really had not carefully worked out a plot to get her insulted. But I felt that argument was no good, and that I had better try to stop Jevon from waltzing me into more trouble. He, however, was gone, and about every third dance I set off to hunt for him. This ruined what little pleasure I expected from the entertainment.

Just before supper I caught Jevon, at the buffet, with his legs wide apart, talking to a very fat and indignant chaperone. "If this person is a friend of yours, as I understand he is, I would recommend you to take him home," said she. "He is unfit for decent society." Then I knew that goodness only knew what Jevon had been doing, and I tried to get him away.

But Jevon wasn't going; not he. He knew what was good for him, he did; and he wasn't going to be dictated to by any loconial nigger-driver, he wasn't; and I was the friend who had formed his infant mind and brought him up to buy Benares brassware and fear God, so I was; and we would have many more blazing good drunks together, so we would; and all the she-camels in black silk in the world shouldn't make him withdraw his opinion that there was nothing better than Benedictine to give one an appetite. And then . . . but he was my guest.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

I set him in a quiet corner of the supper-room, and went to find a wall-prop that I could trust. There was a good and kindly Subaltern—may Heaven bless that Subaltern, and make him a Commander-in-Chief!—who heard of my trouble. He was not dancing himself, and he owned a head like five-year-old teak-baulks. He said that he would look after Jevon till the end of the ball.

“Don’t suppose you much mind what I do with him?” said he.

“Mind!” said I. “No! You can murder the beast if you like.”

But the Subaltern did not murder him. He trotted off to the supper-room, and sat down by Jevon, drinking peg for peg with him. I saw the two fairly established, and went away, feeling more easy.

When “The Roast Beef of Old England” sounded, I heard of Jevon’s performances between the first dance and my meeting with him at the buffet. After Mrs. Deemes had cast him off, it seems that he had found his way into the gallery, and offered to conduct the Band or to play any instrument in it just as the Bandmaster pleased.

When the Bandmaster refused, Jevon said that he wasn’t appreciated, and he yearned for sympathy. So he trundled downstairs and sat out four dances with four girls, and proposed to three of them. One of the girls was a married woman



## A FRIEND'S FRIEND

by the way. Then he went into the whist-room, and fell face-down and wept on the hearth-rug in front of the fire, because he had fallen into a den of card-sharpers, and his Mamma had always warned him against bad company. He had done a lot of other things, too, and had taken about three quarts of mixed liquors. Besides speaking of me in the most scandalous fashion !

All the women wanted him turned out, and all the men wanted him kicked. The worst of it was that every one said it was my fault. Now, I put it to you, how on earth could I have known that this innocent, fluffy T. G. would break out in this disgusting manner ? You see, he had gone round the world nearly, and his vocabulary of abuse was cosmopolitan, though mainly Japanese which he had picked up in a low tea-house at Hakodate. It sounded like whistling.

While I was listening to first one man and then another telling me of Jevon's shameless behaviour and asking me for his blood, I wondered where he was. I was prepared to sacrifice him to Society on the spot.

But Jevon was gone, and far away in the corner of the supper-room sat my dear, good Subaltern, a little flushed, eating salad. I went over and said, "Where's Jevon ?"—"In the cloak-room," said the Subaltern. "He'll keep till the women have gone. Don't you interfere with my



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

prisoner." I didn't want to interfere, but I peeped into the cloakroom, and found my guest put to bed on some rolled-up carpets, all comfy, his collar free, and a wet swab on his head.

The rest of the evening I spent in making timid attempts to explain things to Mrs. Deemes and three or four other ladies, and trying to clear my character — for I am a respectable man — from the shameful slurs that my guest had cast upon it. Libel was no word for what he had said.

When I wasn't trying to explain, I was running off to the cloakroom to see that Jevon wasn't dead of apoplexy. I didn't want him to die on my hands. He had eaten my salt.

At last that ghastly ball ended, though I was not in the least restored to Mrs. Deemes' favour. When the ladies had gone, and some one was calling for songs at the second supper, that angelic Subaltern told the servants to bring in the Sahib who was in the cloakroom, and clear away one end of the supper-table. While this was being done, we formed ourselves into a Board of Punishment with the Doctor for President.

Jevon came in on four men's shoulders, and was put down on the table like a corpse in a dissecting-room, while the Doctor lectured on the evils of intemperance and Jevon snored. Then we set to work.

We corked the whole of his face. We filled

## A FRIEND'S FRIEND

his hair with meringue-cream till it looked like a white wig. To protect everything till it dried, a man in the Ordnance Department, who understood the work, luted a big blue-paper cap from a cracker, with meringue-cream, low down on Jevon's forehead. This was punishment, not play, remember. We took gelatine off crackers, and stuck blue gelatine on his nose, and yellow gelatine on his chin, and green and red gelatine on his cheeks, pressing each dab down till it held as firm as goldbeaters' skin.

We put a ham-frill round his neck and tied it in a bow in front. He nodded like a mandarin.

We fixed gelatine on the back of his hands, and burnt-corked them inside, and put small cutlet-frills round his wrists, and tied both wrists together with string. We waxed up the ends of his moustache with isinglass. He looked very martial.

We turned him over, pinned up his coat-tails between his shoulders, and put a rosette of cutlet-frills there. We took up the red cloth from the ball-room to the supper-room, and wound him up in it. There were sixty feet of red cloth, six feet broad; and he rolled up into a big fat bundle, with only that amazing head sticking out.

Lastly, we tied up the surplus of the cloth beyond his feet with cocoanut-fibre string as tightly as we knew how. We were so angry that we hardly laughed at all.

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Just as we finished, we heard the rumble of bullock-carts taking away some chairs and things that the General's wife had lent for the ball. So we hoisted Jevon, like a roll of carpets, into one of the carts, and the carts went away.

Now the most extraordinary part of this tale is that never again did I see or hear anything of Jevon, T. G. He vanished utterly. He was not delivered at the General's house with the carpets. He just went into the black darkness of the end of the night, and was swallowed up. Perhaps he died and was thrown into the river.

But, alive or dead, I have often wondered how he got rid of the red cloth and the meringue-cream. I wonder still whether Mrs. Deemes will ever take any notice of me again, and whether I shall live down the infamous stories that Jevon set afloat about my manners and customs between the first and the ninth waltz of the Afghan Ball. They stick closer than cream.

Wherefore, I want Tranter of the Bombay side, dead or alive. But dead for preference.

## THE GATE OF THE HUNDRED SORROWS

If I can attain Heaven for a pice, why should you be envious ?

*Opium Smoker's Proverb.*

THIS is no work of mine. My friend, Gabral Misquitta, the half-caste, spoke it all, between moonset and morning, six weeks before he died; and I took it down from his mouth as he answered my questions. So :—

It lies between the Coppersmith's Gully and the pipe-stem sellers' quarter, within a hundred yards, too, as the crow flies, of the Mosque of Wazir Khan. I don't mind telling any one this much, but I defy him to find the Gate, however well he may think he knows the City. You might even go through the very gully it stands in a hundred times, and be none the wiser. We used to call the gully, "The Gully of the Black Smoke," but its native name is altogether different of course. A loaded donkey couldn't pass between the walls; and, at one point, just before you reach the Gate, a bulged house-front makes people go along all sideways.

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It isn't really a gate, though. It's a house. Old Fung-Tching had it first five years ago. He was a boot-maker in Calcutta. They say that he murdered his wife there when he was drunk. That was why he dropped bazar-rum and took to the Black Smoke instead. Later on, he came up north and opened the Gate as a house where you could get your smoke in peace and quiet. Mind you, it was a *pukka*, respectable opium-house, and not one of those stifling, sweltering *chandoo-khanas* that you can find all over the City. No; the old man knew his business thoroughly, and he was most clean for a Chinaman. He was a one-eyed little chap, not much more than five feet high, and both his middle fingers were gone. All the same, he was the handiest man at rolling black pills I have ever seen. Never seemed to be touched by the Smoke, either; and what he took day and night, night and day, was a caution. I've been at it five years, and I can do my fair share of the Smoke with any one; but I was a child to Fung-Tching that way. All the same, the old man was keen on his money: very keen; and that's what I can't understand. I heard he saved a good deal before he died, but his nephew has got all that now; and the old man's gone back to China to be buried.

He kept the big upper room, where his best customers gathered, as neat as a new pin. In one corner used to stand Fung-Tching's Joss—almost

## GATE OF THE HUNDRED SORROWS

as ugly as Fung-Tching — and there were always sticks burning under his nose; but you never smelt 'em when the pipes were going thick. Opposite the Joss was Fung-Tching's coffin. He had spent a good deal of his savings on that, and whenever a new man came to the Gate he was always introduced to it. It was lacquered black, with red and gold writings on it, and I've heard that Fung-Tching brought it out all the way from China. I don't know whether that's true or not, but I know that, if I came first in the evening, I used to spread my mat just at the foot of it. It was a quiet corner, you see, and a sort of breeze from the gully came in at the window now and then. Besides the mats, there was no other furniture in the room — only the coffin, and the old Joss all green and blue and purple with age and polish.

Fung-Tching never told us why he called the place "The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows." (He was the only Chinaman I know who used bad-sounding fancy names. Most of them are flowery. As you'll see in Calcutta.) We used to find that out for ourselves. Nothing grows on you so much, if you're white, as the Black Smoke. A yellow man is made different. Opium doesn't tell on him scarcely at all; but white and black suffer a good deal. Of course, there are some people that the Smoke doesn't touch any more than tobacco would at first. They just doze a



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

bit, as one would fall asleep naturally, and next morning they are almost fit for work. Now, I was one of that sort when I began, but I've been at it for five years pretty steadily, and it's different now. There was an old aunt of mine, down Agra way, and she left me a little at her death. About sixty rupees a month secured. Sixty isn't much. I can recollect a time, 'seems hundreds and hundreds of years ago, that I was getting my three hundred a month, and pickings, when I was working on a big timber-contract in Calcutta.

I didn't stick to that work for long. The Black Smoke does not allow of much other business; and even though I am very little affected by it, as men go, I couldn't do a day's work now to save my life. After all, sixty rupees is what I want. When old Fung-Tching was alive he used to draw the money for me, give me about half of it to live on (I eat very little), and the rest he kept himself. I was free of the Gate at any time of the day and night, and could smoke and sleep there when I liked, so I didn't care. I know the old man made a good thing out of it; but that's no matter. Nothing matters much to me; and besides, the money always came fresh and fresh each month.

There was ten of us met at the Gate when the place was first opened. Me, and two Baboos from a Government Office somewhere in Anarkulli, but



## GATE OF THE HUNDRED SORROWS

they got the sack and couldn't pay (no man who has to work in the daylight can do the Black Smoke for any length of time straight on); a Chinaman that was Fung-Tching's nephew; a bazar-woman that had got a lot of money somehow; an English loafer—MacSomebody, I think, but I have forgotten—that smoked heaps, but never seemed to pay anything (they said he had saved Fung-Tching's life at some trial in Calcutta when he was a barrister); another Eurasian, like myself, from Madras; a half-caste woman, and a couple of men who said they had come from the North. I think they must have been Persians or Afghans or something. There are not more than five of us living now, but we come regular. I don't know what happened to the Baboos; but the bazar-woman she died after six months of the Gate, and I think Fung-Tching took her bangles and nose-ring for himself. But I'm not certain. The Englishman, he drank as well as smoked, and he dropped off. One of the Persians got killed in a row at night by the big well near the mosque a long time ago, and the Police shut up the well, because they said it was full of foul air. They found him dead at the bottom of it. So you see, there is only me, the Chinaman, the half-caste woman that we call the Memsahib (she used to live with Fung-Tching), the other Eurasian, and one of the Persians. The Memsahib looks very old

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now. I think she was a young woman when the Gate was opened; but we are all old for the matter of that. Hundreds and hundreds of years old. It is very hard to keep count of time in the Gate, and, besides, time doesn't matter to me. I draw my sixty rupees fresh and fresh every month. A very, very long while ago, when I used to be getting three hundred and fifty rupees a month, and pickings, on a big timber-contract at Calcutta, I had a wife of sorts. But she's dead now. People said that I killed her by taking to the Black Smoke. Perhaps I did, but it's so long since that it doesn't matter. Sometimes when I first came to the Gate, I used to feel sorry for it; but that's all over and done with long ago, and I draw my sixty rupees fresh and fresh every month, and am quite happy. Not *drunk* happy, you know, but always quiet and soothed and contented.

How did I take to it? It began at Calcutta. I used to try it in my own house, just to see what it was like. I never went very far, but I think my wife must have died then. Anyhow, I found myself here, and got to know Fung-Tching. I don't remember rightly how that came about; but he told me of the Gate and I used to go there, and, somehow, I have never got away from it since. Mind you, though, the Gate was a respectable place in Fung-Tching's time where you could be comfortable, and not at all like the *chan-*

## GATE OF THE HUNDRED SORROWS

*doo-khanas* where the niggers go. No; it was clean and quiet, and not crowded. Of course, there were others beside us ten and the man; but we always had a mat apiece, with a wadded woollen headpiece, all covered with black and red dragons and things; just like the coffin in the corner.

At the end of one's third pipe the dragons used to move about and fight. I've watched 'em many and many a night through. I used to regulate my Smoke that way, and now it takes a dozen pipes to make 'em stir. Besides, they are all torn and dirty, like the mats, and old Fung-Tching is dead. He died a couple of years ago, and gave me the pipe I always use now — a silver one, with queer beasts crawling up and down the receiver-bottle below the cup. Before that, I used a big bamboo stem with a copper cup, a very small one, and a green jade mouthpiece. It was a little thicker than a walking-stick stem, and smoked sweet, very sweet. The bamboo seemed to suck up the smoke. Silver doesn't, and I've got to clean it out now and then; that's a great deal of trouble, but I smoke it for the old man's sake. He must have made a good thing out of me, but he always gave me clean mats and pillows, and the best stuff you could get anywhere.

When he died, his nephew Tsin-ling took up the Gate, and he called it the "Temple of the

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Three Possessions"; but we old ones speak of it as the "Hundred Sorrows," all the same. The nephew does things very shabbily, and I think the Memsahib must help him. She lives with him; same as she used to do with the old man. The two let in all sorts of low people, niggers and all, and the Black Smoke isn't as good as it used to be. I've found burnt bran in my pipe over and over again. The old man would have died if that had happened in his time. Besides, the room is never cleaned, and all the mats are torn and cut at the edges. The coffin is gone—gone to China again—with the old man and two ounces of Smoke inside it, in case he should want 'em on the way.

The Joss doesn't get so many sticks burnt under his nose as he used to; that's a sign of ill-luck, as sure as Death. He's all brown, too, and no one ever attends to him. That's the Memsahib's work, I know; because, when Tsin-ling tried to burn gilt paper before him, she said it was a waste of money, and, if he kept a stick burning very slowly, the Joss wouldn't know the difference. So now we've got the sticks mixed with a lot of glue, and they take half an hour longer to burn, and smell stinky. Let alone the smell of the room by itself. No business can get on if they try that sort of thing. The Joss doesn't like it. I can see that. Late at night, sometimes, he turns all sorts of

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queer colours — blue and green and red — just as he used to do when old Fung-Tching was alive; and he rolls his eyes and stamps his feet like a devil.

I don't know why I don't leave the place and smoke quietly in a little room of my own in the bazar. Most like, Tsin-ling would kill me if I went away — he draws my sixty rupees now — and besides, it's so much trouble, and I've grown to be very fond of the Gate. It's not much to look at. Not what it was in the old man's time, but I couldn't leave it. I've seen so many come in and out. And I've seen so many die here on the mats that I should be afraid of dying in the open now. I've seen some things that people would call strange enough; but nothing is strange when you're on the Black Smoke, except the Black Smoke. And if it was, it wouldn't matter. Fung-Tching used to be very particular about his people, and never got in any one who'd give trouble by dying messy and such. But the nephew isn't half so careful. He tells everywhere that he keeps a "first-chop" house. Never tries to get men in quietly, and make them comfortable like Fung-Tching did. That's why the Gate is getting a little bit more known than it used to be. Among the niggers of course. The nephew daren't get a white, or, for matter of that, a mixed skin into the place. He has to keep us three of

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course — me and the Memsahib and the other Eurasian. We're fixtures. But he wouldn't give us credit for a pipeful — not for anything.

One of these days, I hope, I shall die in the Gate. The Persian and the Madras man are terribly shaky now. They've got a boy to light their pipes for them. I always do that myself. Most like, I shall see them carried out before me. I don't think I shall ever outlive the Memsahib or Tsin-ling. Women last longer than men at the Black Smoke, and Tsin-ling has a deal of the old man's blood in him, though he does smoke cheap stuff. The bazar-woman knew when she was going two days before her time, and she died on a clean mat with a nicely wadded pillow, and the old man hung up her pipe just above the Joss. He was always fond of her, I fancy. But he took her bangles just the same.

I should like to die like the bazar-woman — on a clean, cool mat with a pipe of good stuff between my lips. When I feel I'm going, I shall ask Tsin-ling for them, and he can draw my sixty rupees a month, fresh and fresh, as long as he pleases. Then I shall lie back, quiet and comfortable, and watch the black and red dragons have their last big fight together; and then . . .

Well, it doesn't matter. Nothing matters much to me — only I wish Tsin-ling wouldn't put bran into the Black Smoke.



## THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD DIN

Who is the happy man? He that sees in his own house at home little children crowned with dust, leaping and falling and crying.—*Munichandra*, translated by Professor Peterson.

THE polo-ball was an old one, scarred, chipped, and dented. It stood on the mantelpiece among the pipe-stems which Imam Din, *khitmatgar*, was cleaning for me.

“Does the Heaven-born want this ball?” said Imam Din deferentially.

The Heaven-born set no particular store by it; but of what use was a polo-ball to a *khitmatgar*?

“By Your Honour’s favour, I have a little son. He has seen this ball, and desires it to play with. I do not want it for myself.”

No one would for an instant accuse portly old Imam Din of wanting to play with polo-balls. He carried out the battered thing into the verandah; and there followed a hurricane of joyful squeaks, a patter of small feet, and the *thud-thud-thud* of the ball rolling along the ground. Evidently the little son had been waiting outside the door to secure his treasure. But how had he managed to see that polo-ball?



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Next day, coming back from office half an hour earlier than usual, I was aware of a small figure in the dining-room—a tiny, plump figure in a ridiculously inadequate shirt which came, perhaps, half-way down the tubby stomach. It wandered round the room, thumb in mouth, crooning to itself as it took stock of the pictures. Undoubtedly this was the “little son.”

He had no business in my room, of course; but was so deeply absorbed in his discoveries that he never noticed me in the doorway. I stepped into the room and startled him nearly into a fit. He sat down on the ground with a gasp. His eyes opened, and his mouth followed suit. I knew what was coming, and fled, followed by a long, dry howl which reached the servants' quarters far more quickly than any command of mine had ever done. In ten seconds Imam Din was in the dining-room. Then despairing sobs arose, and I returned to find Imam Din admonishing the small sinner, who was using most of his shirt as a handkerchief.

“This boy,” said Imam Din judicially, “is a *budmash*—a big *budmash*. He will, without doubt, go to the *jail-khana* for his behaviour.” Renewed yells from the penitent, and an elaborate apology to myself from Imam Din.

“Tell the baby,” said I, “that the Sahib is not angry, and take him away.” Imam Din conveyed

## THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD DIN

my forgiveness to the offender, who had now gathered all his shirt round his neck, stringwise, and the yell subsided into a sob. The two set off for the door. "His name," said Imam Din, as though the name were part of the crime, "is Muhammad Din, and he is a *budmash*." Freed from present danger, Muhammad Din turned round in his father's arms, and said gravely, "It is true that my name is Muhammad Din, Tahib, but I am not a *budmash*. I am a *man*!"

From that day dated my acquaintance with Muhammad Din. Never again did he come into my dining-room, but on the neutral ground of the garden, we greeted each other with much state, though our conversation was confined to "*Talaam*, Tahib" from his side, and "*Salaam* Muhammad Din" from mine. Daily on my return from office, the little white shirt and the fat little body used to rise from the shade of the creeper-covered trellis where they had been hid; and daily I checked my horse here; that my salutation might not be slurred over or given unseemly.

Muhammad Din never had any companions. He used to trot about the compound, in and out of the castor-oil bushes, on mysterious errands of his own. One day I stumbled upon some of his handiwork far down the grounds. He had half buried the polo-ball in dust, and stuck six shrivelled old marigold flowers in a circle round it.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Outside that circle again was a rude square, traced out in bits of red brick alternating with fragments of broken china; the whole bounded by a little bank of dust. The water-man from the well-curb put in a plea for the small architect, saying that it was only the play of a baby and did not much disfigure my garden.

Heaven knows that I had no intention of touching the child's work then or later; but, that evening, a stroll through the garden brought me unawares full on it; so that I trampled, before I knew, marigold-heads, dust-bank, and fragments of broken soap-dish into confusion past all hope of mending. Next morning, I came upon Muhammad Din crying softly to himself over the ruin I had wrought. Some one had cruelly told him that the Sahib was very angry with him for spoiling the garden, and had scattered his rubbish, using bad language the while. Muhammad Din laboured for an hour at effacing every trace of the dust-bank and pottery fragments, and it was with a tearful and apologetic face that he said, "*Talaam, Tahib,*" when I came home from office. A hasty inquiry resulted in Imam Din informing Muhammad Din that, by my singular favour, he was permitted to disport himself as he pleased. Whereat the child took heart and fell to tracing the ground-plan of an edifice which was to eclipse the marigold-polo-ball creation.

## THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD DIN

For some months the chubby little eccentricity revolved in his humble orbit among the castor-oil bushes and in the dust; always fashioning magnificent palaces from stale flowers thrown away by the bearer, smooth water-worn pebbles, bits of broken glass, and feathers pulled, I fancy, from my fowls — always alone, and always crooning to himself.

A gaily-spotted sea-shell was dropped one day close to the last of his little buildings; and I looked that Muhammad Din should build something more than ordinarily splendid on the strength of it. Nor was I disappointed. He meditated for the better part of an hour, and his crooning rose to a jubilant song. Then he began tracing in the dust. It would certainly be a wondrous palace, this one, for it was two yards long and a yard broad in ground-plan. But the palace was never completed.

Next day there was no Muhammad Din at the head of the carriage-drive, and no "*Talaam, Tahib*" to welcome my return. I had grown accustomed to the greeting, and its omission troubled me. Next day Imam Din told me that the child was suffering slightly from fever and needed quinine. He got the medicine, and an English Doctor.

"They have no stamina, these brats," said the Doctor, as he left Imam Din's quarters.

A week later, though I would have given much

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to have avoided it, I met on the road to the Mus-  
sulman burying-ground Imam Din, accompanied  
by one other friend, carrying in his arms, wrapped  
in a white cloth, all that was left of little Muham-  
mad Din.

## ON THE STRENGTH OF A LIKENESS

If your mirror be broken, look into still water; but have a care that you do not fall in.—*Hindu Proverb.*

NEXT to a requited attachment, one of the most convenient things that a young man can carry about with him at the beginning of his career is an unrequited attachment. It makes him feel important and business-like, and *blasé*, and cynical; and whenever he has a touch of liver, or suffers from want of exercise, he can mourn over his lost love, and be very happy in a tender, twilight fashion.

Hannasyde's affair of the heart had been a god-send to him. It was four years old, and the girl had long since given up thinking of it. She had married and had many cares of her own. In the beginning, she had told Hannasyde that, "while she could never be anything more than a sister to him, she would always take the deepest interest in his welfare." This startlingly new and original remark gave Hannasyde something to think over for two years; and his own vanity filled in the other twenty-four months. Hannasyde was quite different from Phil Garron, but, none the less, had

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

several points in common with that far too lucky man.

He kept his unrequited attachment by him as men keep a well-smoked pipe—for comfort's sake, and because it had grown dear in the using. It brought him happily through one Simla season. Hannasyde was not lovely. There was a crudity in his manners, and a roughness in the way in which he helped a lady on to her horse, that did not attract the other sex to him. Even if he had cast about for their favour, which he did not. He kept his wounded heart all to himself for a while.

Then trouble came to him. All who go to Simla know the slope from the Telegraph to the Public Works Office. Hannasyde was loafing up the hill, one September morning between calling-hours, when a 'rickshaw came down in a hurry, and in the 'rickshaw sat the living, breathing image of the girl who had made him so happily unhappy. Hannasyde leaned against the railings and gasped. He wanted to run downhill after the 'rickshaw, but that was impossible; so he went forward with most of his blood in his temples. It was impossible, for many reasons, that the woman in the 'rickshaw could be the girl he had known. She was, he discovered later, the wife of a man from Dindigul, or Coimbatore, or some out-of-the-way place, and she had come up to Simla early in the season for the good of her



## ON THE STRENGTH OF A LIKENESS

health. She was going back to Dindigul, or wherever it was, at the end of the season; and in all likelihood would never return to Simla again; her proper Hill-station being Ootacamund. That night Hannasyde, raw and savage from the raking up of all old feelings, took counsel with himself for one measured hour. What he decided upon was this; and you must decide for yourself how much genuine affection for the old Love, and how much a very natural inclination to go abroad and enjoy himself, affected the decision. Mrs. Landys-Haggert would never in all human likelihood cross his path again. So whatever he did didn't much matter. She was marvellously like the girl who "took a deep interest" and the rest of the formula. All things considered, it would be pleasant to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Landys-Haggert, and for a little time—only a very little time—to make believe that he was with Alice Chisane again. Every one is more or less mad on one point. Hannasyde's particular monomania was his old love, Alice Chisane.

He made it his business to get introduced to Mrs. Haggert, and the introduction prospered. He also made it his business to see as much as he could of that lady. When a man is in earnest as to interviews, the facilities which Simla offers are startling. There are garden-parties, and tennis-parties, and picnics, and luncheons at Annandale,

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and rifle-matches, and dinners and balls; besides rides and walks, which are matters of private arrangement. Hannasyde had started with the intention of seeing a likeness, and he ended by doing much more. He wanted to be deceived, he meant to be deceived, and he deceived himself very thoroughly. Not only were the face and figure the face and figure of Alice Chisane, but the voice and lower tones were exactly the same, and so were the turns of speech; and the little mannerisms, that every woman has, of gait and gesticulation, were absolutely and identically the same. The turn of the head was the same; the tired look in the eyes at the end of a long walk was the same; the stoop-and-wrench over the saddle to hold in a pulling horse was the same; and once, most marvellous of all, Mrs. Landys-Haggert singing to herself in the next room, while Hannasyde was waiting to take her for a ride, hummed, note for note, with a throaty quiver of the voice in the second line, "Poor Wandering One!" exactly as Alice Chisane had hummed it for Hannasyde in the dusk of an English drawing-room. In the actual woman herself—in the soul of her—there was not the least likeness; she and Alice Chisane being cast in different moulds. But all that Hannasyde wanted to know and see and think about, was this maddening and perplexing likeness of face and voice and manner. He was

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bent on making a fool of himself that way; and he was in no sort disappointed.

Open and obvious devotion from any sort of man is always pleasant to any sort of woman; but Mrs. Landys-Haggert, being a woman of the world, could make nothing of Hannasyde's admiration.

He would take any amount of trouble—he was a selfish man habitually—to meet and forestall, if possible, her wishes. Anything she told him to do was law; and he was, there could be no doubting it, fond of her company so long as she talked to him and kept on talking about trivialities. But when she launched into expression of her personal views and her wrongs, those small social differences that make the spice of Simla life, Hannasyde was neither pleased nor interested. He didn't want to know anything about Mrs. Landys-Haggert, or her experiences in the past—she had travelled nearly all over the world, and could talk cleverly—he wanted the likeness of Alice Chisane before his eyes and her voice in his ears. Anything outside that, reminding him of another personality, jarred, and he showed that it did.

Under the new Post Office one evening, Mrs. Landys-Haggert turned on him, and spoke her mind shortly and without warning. “Mr. Hannasyde,” said she, “will you be good enough to explain why you have appointed yourself my special *cavalier servente*? I don't understand it.

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But I am perfectly certain, somehow or other, that you don't care the least little bit in the world for *me*." This seems to support, by the way, the theory that no man can act or tell lies to a woman without being found out. Hannasyde was taken off his guard. His defence never was a strong one, because he was always thinking of himself, and he blurted out, before he knew what he was saying, this inexpedient answer, "No more I do."

The queerness of the situation and the reply made Mrs. Landys-Haggert laugh. Then it all came out; and at the end of Hannasyde's lucid explanation Mrs. Haggert said, with the least little touch of scorn in her voice, "So I'm to act as the lay-figure for you to hang the rags of your tattered affections on, am I?"

Hannasyde didn't see what answer was required, and he devoted himself generally and vaguely to the praise of Alice Chisane, which was unsatisfactory. Now it is to be thoroughly made clear that Mrs. Haggert had not the shadow of a ghost of an interest in Hannasyde. Only . . . only no woman likes being made love through instead of to—specially on behalf of a musty divinity of four years' standing.

Hannasyde did not see that he had made any very particular exhibition of himself. He was glad to find a sympathetic soul in the arid wastes of Simla.

## ON THE STRENGTH OF A LIKENESS

When the season ended, Hannasyde went down to his own place and Mrs. Haggert to hers. "It was like making love to a ghost," said Hannasyde to himself, "and it doesn't matter; and now I'll get to my work." But he found himself thinking steadily of the Haggert-Chisane ghost; and he could not be certain whether it was Haggert or Chisane that made up the greater part of the pretty phantom.

. . . . .  
He got understanding a month later.

A peculiar point of this peculiar country is the way in which a heartless Government transfers men from one end of the Empire to the other. You can never be sure of getting rid of a friend or an enemy till he or she dies. There was a case once — but that's another story.

Haggert's Department ordered him up from Dindigul to the Frontier at two days' notice, and he went through, losing money at every step, from Dindigul to his station. He dropped Mrs. Haggert at Lucknow, to stay with some friends there, to take part in a big ball at the Chutter Munzil, and to come on when he had made the new home a little comfortable. Lucknow was Hannasyde's station, and Mrs. Haggert stayed a week there. Hannasyde went to meet her. As the train came in, he discovered what he had been thinking of for the past month. The unwisdom

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

of his conduct also struck him. The Lucknow week, with two dances, and an unlimited quantity of rides together, clinched matters; and Hannasyde found himself pacing this circle of thought: — He adored Alice Chisane, at least he *had* adored her. *And* he admired Mrs. Landys-Haggert because she was like Alice Chisane. *But* Mrs. Landys-Haggert was not in the least like Alice Chisane, being a thousand times more adorable. *Now* Alice Chisane was “the bride of another,” and so was Mrs. Landys-Haggert, and a good and honest wife, too. *Therefore* he, Hannasyde, was . . . here he called himself several hard names, and wished that he had been wise in the beginning.

Whether Mrs. Landys-Haggert saw what was going on in his mind, she alone knows. He seemed to take an unqualified interest in everything connected with herself, as distinguished from the Alice-Chisane likeness, and he said one or two things which, if Alice Chisane had been still betrothed to him, could scarcely have been excused, even on the grounds of the likeness. But Mrs. Haggert turned the remarks aside, and spent a long time in making Hannasyde see what a comfort and a pleasure she had been to him because of her strange resemblance to his old love. Hannasyde groaned in his saddle and said, “Yes, indeed,” and busied himself with preparations for



## ON THE STRENGTH OF A LIKENESS

her departure to the Frontier, feeling very small and miserable.

The last day of her stay at Lucknow came, and Hannasyde saw her off at the Railway Station. She was very grateful for his kindness and the trouble he had taken, and smiled pleasantly and sympathetically as one who knew the Alice-Chisane reason of that kindness. And Hannasyde abused the coolies with the luggage, and hustled the people on the platform, and prayed that the roof might fall in and slay him.

As the train went out slowly, Mrs. Landys-Haggert leaned out of the window to say good-bye—"On second thoughts *au revoir*, Mr. Hannasyde. I go Home in the Spring, and perhaps I may meet you in Town."

Hannasyde shook hands, and said very earnestly and adoringly—"I hope to Heaven I shall never see your face again!"

And Mrs. Haggert understood.



## WRESSLEY OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

I closed and drew for my Love's sake,  
That now is false to me,  
And I slew the Riever of Tarrant Moss,  
And set Dumeny free.

And ever they give me praise and gold,  
And ever I moan my loss ;  
For I struck the blow for my false Love's sake,  
And not for the men of the Moss !

*Tarrant Moss.*

ONE of the many curses of our life in India is the want of atmosphere in the painter's sense. There are no half-tints worth noticing. Men stand out all crude and raw, with nothing to tone them down, and nothing to scale them against. They do their work, and grow to think that there is nothing but their work, and nothing like their work, and that they are the real pivots on which the Administration turns. Here is an instance of this feeling. A half-caste clerk was ruling forms in a Pay Office. He said to me, "Do you know what would happen if I added or took away one single line on this sheet ?" Then, with the air of a con-

## WRESSLEY OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

spirator, "It would disorganize the whole of the Treasury payments throughout the whole of the Presidency Circle! Think of that!"

If men had not this delusion as to the ultra-importance of their own particular employments, I suppose that they would sit down and kill themselves. But their weakness is wearisome, particularly when the listener knows that he himself commits exactly the same sin.

Even the Secretariat believes that it does good when it asks an over-driven Executive Officer to take a census of wheat-weevils through a district of five thousand square miles.

There was a man once in the Foreign Office — a man who had grown middle-aged in the Department, and was commonly said, by irreverent juniors, to be able to repeat Aitchison's "Treaties and Sunnuds" backwards in his sleep. What he did with his stored knowledge only the Secretary knew, and he, naturally, would not publish the news abroad. This man's name was Wressley, and it was the Shibboleth, in those days, to say — "Wressley knows more about the Central Indian States than any living man." If you did not say this, you were considered one of mean understanding.

Nowadays, the man who says that he knows the ravel of the inter-tribal complications across the Border is of more use; but, in Wressley's time, much attention was paid to the Central Indian

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States. They were called "foci" and "factors," and all manner of imposing names.

And here the curse of Anglo-Indian life fell heavily. When Wressley lifted up his voice, and spoke about such-and-such a succession to such-and-such a throne, the Foreign Office were silent, and Heads of Departments repeated the last two or three words of Wressley's sentences, and tacked "yes, yes," on to them, and knew that they were assisting the Empire to grapple with serious political contingencies. In most big undertakings, one or two men do the work while the rest sit near and talk till the ripe decorations begin to fall.

Wressley was the working member of the Foreign Office firm, and, to keep him up to his duties when he showed signs of flagging, he was made much of by his superiors and told what a fine fellow he was. He did not require coaxing, because he was of tough build, but what he received confirmed him in the belief that there was no one quite so absolutely and imperatively necessary to the stability of India as Wressley of the Foreign Office. There might be other good men, but the known, honoured and trusted man among men was Wressley of the Foreign Office. We had a Viceroy in those days who knew exactly when to "gentle" a fractious big man, and to hearten-up a collar-galled little one, and so keep all his team level. He conveyed to Wressley the

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impression which I have just set down; and even tough men are apt to be disorganized by a Viceroy's praise. There was a case once — but that is another story.

All India knew Wressley's name and office — it was in Thacker and Spink's Directory — but who he was personally, or what he did, or what his special merits were, not fifty men knew or cared. His work filled all his time, and he found no leisure to cultivate acquaintances beyond those of dead Rajput chiefs with *Abir* blots in their scutcheons. Wressley would have made a very good Clerk in the Herald's College had he not been a Bengal Civilian.

Upon a day, between office and office, great trouble came to Wressley — overwhelmed him, knocked him down, and left him gasping as though he had been a little schoolboy. Without reason, against prudence, and at a moment's notice, he fell in love with a frivolous, golden-haired girl who used to tear about Simla Mall on a high, rough Waler, with a blue velvet jockey-cap crammed over her eyes. Her name was Venner — Tillie Venner — and she was delightful. She took Wressley's heart at a hand-gallop, and Wressley found that it was not good for man to live alone; even with half the Foreign Office Records in his presses.

Then Simla laughed, for Wressley in love was

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slightly ridiculous. He did his best to interest the girl in himself—that is to say, his work—and she, after the manner of women, did her best to appear interested in what, behind his back, she called “Mr. W’essley’s Wajahs”; for she lisped very prettily. She did not understand one little thing about them, but she acted as if she did. Men have married on that sort of error before now.

Providence, however, had care of Wressley. He was immensely struck with Miss Venner’s intelligence. He would have been more impressed had he heard her private and confidential accounts of his calls. He held peculiar notions as to the wooing of girls. He said that the best work of a man’s career should be laid reverently at their feet. Ruskin writes something like this somewhere, I think; but in ordinary life a few kisses are better and save time.

About a month after he had lost his heart to Miss Venner, and had been doing his work vilely in consequence, the first idea of his “Native Rule in Central India” struck Wressley and filled him with joy. It was, as he sketched it, a great thing—the work of his life—a really comprehensive survey of a most fascinating subject—to be written with all the special and laboriously acquired knowledge of Wressley of the Foreign Office—a gift fit for an Empress.

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He told Miss Venner that he was going to take leave, and hoped, on his return, to bring her a present worthy of her acceptance. Would she wait? Certainly she would. Wressley drew seventeen hundred rupees a month. She would wait a year for that. Her Mamma would help her to wait.

So Wressley took one year's leave and all the available documents, about a truck-load, that he could lay hands on, and went down to Central India with his notion hot in his head. He began his book in the land he was writing of. Too much official correspondence had made him a frigid workman, and he must have guessed that he needed the white light of local colour on his palette. This is a dangerous paint for amateurs to play with.

Heavens, how that man worked! He caught his Rajahs, analysed his Rajahs, and traced them up into the mists of Time and beyond, with their queens and their concubines. He dated and cross-dated, pedigreed and triple-pedigreed, compared, noted, connoted, wove, strung, sorted, selected, inferred, calendared and counter-calendared for ten hours a day. And, because this sudden and new light of Love was upon him, he turned those dry bones of history and dirty records of misdeeds into things to weep or to laugh over as he pleased. His heart and soul were at the end



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of his pen, and they got into the ink. He was dowered with sympathy, insight, humour, and style for two hundred and thirty days and nights; and his book was a Book. He had his vast special knowledge with him, so to speak; but the spirit, the woven-in human Touch, the poetry and the power of the output, were beyond all special knowledge. But I doubt whether he knew the gift that was in him then, and thus he may have lost some happiness. He was toiling for Tillie Venner, not for himself. Men often do their best work blind, for some one else's sake.

Also, though this has nothing to do with the story, in India, where every one knows every one else, you can watch men being driven, by the women who govern them, out of the rank-and-file and sent to take up points alone. A good man, once started, goes forward; but an average man, so soon as the woman loses interest in his success as a tribute to her power, comes back to the battalion and is no more heard of.

Wressley bore the first copy of his book to Simla, and, blushing and stammering, presented it to Miss Venner. She read a little of it. I give her review *verbatim*—"Oh your book? It's all about those howwid Wajahs. I didn't understand it."

. . . . .

Wressley of the Foreign Office was broken, smashed—I am not exaggerating--by this one



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frivolous little girl. All that he could say feebly was — “But—but it’s my *magnum opus*! The work of my life.” Miss Venner did not know what *magnum opus* meant; but she knew that Captain Kerrington had won three races at the last Gymkhana. Wressley didn’t press her to wait for him any longer. He had sense enough for that.

Then came the reaction after the year’s strain, and Wressley went back to the Foreign Office and his “Wajahs,” a compiling, gazetteering, report-writing hack, who would have been dear at three hundred rupees a month. He abided by Miss Venner’s review. Which proves that the inspiration in the book was purely temporary and unconnected with himself. Nevertheless, he had no right to sink, in a hill-tarn, five packing-cases, brought up at enormous expense from Bombay, of the best book of Indian history ever written.

When he sold off before retiring, some years later, I was turning over his shelves, and came across the only existing copy of “Native Rule in Central India”—the copy that Miss Venner could not understand. I read it, sitting on his mule-trunks, as long as the light lasted, and offered him his own price for it. He looked over my shoulder for a few pages, and said to himself drearily —

“Now, how in the world did I come to write such damned good stuff as that?”

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

Then to me —

“Take it and keep it. Write one of your penny-farthing yarns about its birth. Perhaps—perhaps—the whole business may have been ordained to that end.”

Which, knowing what Wressley of the Foreign Office was once, struck me as about the bitterest thing that I had ever heard a man say of his own work.

## BY WORD OF MOUTH

Not though you die to-night, O Sweet, and wail,  
A spectre at my door,  
Shall mortal Fear make Love immortal fail—  
I shall but love you more,  
Who, from Death's house returning, give me still  
One moment's comfort in my matchless ill.

*Shadow Houses.*

THIS tale may be explained by those who know how souls are made, and where the bounds of the Possible are put down. I have lived long enough in this India to know that it is best to know nothing, and can only write the story as it happened.

Dumoise was our Civil Surgeon at Meridki, and we called him "Dormouse," because he was a round little, sleepy little man. He was a good Doctor and never quarrelled with any one, not even with our Deputy Commissioner who had the manners of a bargee and the tact of a horse. He married a girl as round and as sleepy-looking as himself. She was a Miss Hillardyce, daughter of "Squash" Hillardyce of the Berars, who married his Chief's daughter by mistake. But that is another story.

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

A honeymoon in India is seldom more than a week long; but there is nothing to hinder a couple from extending it over two or three years. India is a delightful country for married folk who are wrapped up in one another. They can live absolutely alone and without interruption — just as the Dormice did. Those two little people retired from the world after their marriage, and were very happy. They were forced, of course, to give occasional dinners, but they made no friends thereby, and the Station went its own way and forgot them; only saying, occasionally, that Dormouse was the best of good fellows, though dull. A Civil Surgeon who never quarrels is a rarity, appreciated as such.

Few people can afford to play Robinson Crusoe anywhere — least of all in India, where we are few in the land and very much dependent on each other's kind offices. Dumoise was wrong in shutting himself from the world for a year, and he discovered his mistake when an epidemic of typhoid broke out in the Station in the heart of the cold weather, and his wife went down. He was a shy little man, and five days were wasted before he realised that Mrs. Dumoise was burning with something worse than simple fever, and three days more passed before he ventured to call on Mrs. Shute, the Engineer's wife, and timidly speak about his trouble. Nearly every household in India knows

## BY WORD OF MOUTH

that Doctors are very helpless in typhoid. The battle must be fought out between Death and the Nurses minute by minute and degree by degree. Mrs. Shute almost boxed Dumoise's ears for what she called his "criminal delay," and went off at once to look after the poor girl. We had seven cases of typhoid in the Station that winter, and, as the average of death is about one in every five cases, we felt certain that we should have to lose somebody. But all did their best. The women sat up nursing the women, and the men turned to and tended the bachelors who were down, and we wrestled with those typhoid cases for fifty-six days, and brought them through the Valley of the Shadow in triumph. But, just when we thought all was over, and were going to give a dance to celebrate the victory, little Mrs. Dumoise got a relapse and died in a week, and the Station went to the funeral. Dumoise broke down utterly at the brink of the grave, and had to be taken away.

After the death, Dumoise crept into his own house and refused to be comforted. He did his duties perfectly, but we all felt that he should go on leave, and the other men of his own Service told him so. Dumoise was very thankful for the suggestion — he was thankful for anything in those days — and went to Chini on a walking-tour. Chini is some twenty marches from Simla, in the heart of the Hills, and the scenery is good if you

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

are in trouble. You pass through big, still deodar forests, and under big, still cliffs, and over big, still grass-downs swelling like a woman's breasts; and the wind across the grass and the rain among the deodars say — "Hush — hush — hush." So little Dumoise was packed off to Chini, to wear down his grief with a full-plate camera and a rifle. He took also a useless bearer, because the man had been his wife's favourite servant. He was idle and a thief, but Dumoise trusted everything to him.

On his way back from Chini, Dumoise turned aside to Bagi, through the Forest Reserve which is on the spur of Mount Huttoo. Some men who have travelled more than a little say that the march from Kotgarh to Bagi is one of the finest in creation. It runs through dark, wet forest, and ends suddenly in bleak, nipped hillside and black rocks. Bagi dāk-bungalow is open to all the winds and is bitterly cold. Few people go to Bagi. Perhaps that was the reason why Dumoise went there. He halted at seven in the evening, and his bearer went down the hillside to the village to engage coolies for the next day's march. The sun had set, and the night-winds were beginning to croon among the rocks. Dumoise leaned on the railing of the verandah, waiting for his bearer to return. The man came back almost immediately after he had disappeared, and at such a rate that Dumoise

## BY WORD OF MOUTH

fancied he must have crossed a bear. He was running as hard as he could up the face of the hill.

But there was no bear to account for his terror. He raced to the verandah and fell down, the blood spurting from his nose and his face iron-gray. Then he gurgled — “I have seen the Memsahib! I have seen the Memsahib!”

“Where?” said Dumoise.

“Down there, walking on the road to the village. She was in a blue dress, and she lifted the veil of her bonnet and said — ‘Ram Dass, give my *salaams* to the Sahib, and tell him that I shall meet him next month at Nuddea.’ Then I ran away, because I was afraid.”

What Dumoise said or did I do not know. Ram Dass declares that he said nothing, but walked up and down the verandah all the cold night, waiting for the Memsahib to come up the hill and stretching out his arms into the dark like a madman. But no Memsahib came, and next day he went on to Simla, cross-questioning the bearer every hour.

Ram Dass could only say that he had met Mrs. Dumoise and that she had lifted up her veil and given him the message which he had faithfully repeated to Dumoise. To this statement Ram Dass adhered. He did not know where Nuddea was, had no friends at Nuddea, and would most



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

certainly never go to Nuddea; even though his pay were doubled.

Nuddea is in Bengal, and has nothing whatever to do with a Doctor serving in the Punjab. It must be more than twelve hundred miles south of Meridki.

Dumoise went through Simla without halting, and returned to Meridki, there to take over charge from the man who had been officiating for him during his tour. There were some Dispensary accounts to be explained, and some recent orders of the Surgeon-General to be noted, and, altogether, the taking-over was a full day's work. In the evening, Dumoise told his *locum tenens*, who was an old friend of his bachelor days, what had happened at Bagi; and the man said that Ram Dass might as well have chosen Tuticorin while he was about it.

At that moment a telegraph-peon came in with a telegram from Simla, ordering Dumoise not to take over charge at Meridki, but to go at once to Nuddea on special duty. There was a nasty outbreak of cholera at Nuddea, and the Bengal Government, being short-handed, as usual, had borrowed a Surgeon from the Punjab.

Dumoise threw the telegram across the table and said—"Well?"

The other Doctor said nothing. It was all that he could say.

## BY WORD OF MOUTH

Then he remembered that Dumoise had passed through Simla on his way from Bagi; and thus might, possibly, have heard first news of the impending transfer.

He tried to put the question, and the implied suspicion into words, but Dumoise stopped him with —“If I had desired *that*, I should never have come back from Chini. I was shooting there. I wish to live, for I have things to do . . . but I shall not be sorry.”

The other man bowed his head, and helped, in the twilight, to pack up Dumoise's just opened trunks. Ram Dass entered with the lamps.

“Where is the Sahib going?” he asked.

“To Nuddea,” said Dumoise softly.

Ram Dass clawed Dumoise's knees and boots, and begged him not to go. Ram Dass wept and howled till he was turned out of the room. Then he wrapped up all his belongings and came back to ask for a character. He was not going to Nuddea to see his Sahib die and, perhaps, to die himself.

So Dumoise gave the man his wages and went down to Nuddea alone; the other Doctor bidding him good-bye as one under sentence of death.

Eleven days later he had joined his Memsahib; and the Bengal Government had to borrow a fresh Doctor to cope with that epidemic at Nuddea. The first importation lay dead in Chooadanga dâk-bungalow.

## TO BE FILED FOR REFERENCE

By the hoof of the Wild Goat up-tossed  
From the Cliff where She lay in the Sun,  
Fell the Stone  
To the Tarn where the daylight is lost;  
So She fell from the light of the Sun,  
And alone.

Now the fall was ordained from the first,  
With the Goat and the Cliff and the Tarn,  
But the Stone  
Knows only Her life is accursed,  
As She sinks in the depths of the Tarn,  
And alone.

Oh, Thou who hast builded the world !  
Oh, Thou who hast lighted the Sun !  
Oh, Thou who hast darkened the Tarn !  
Judge Thou

The sin of the Stone that was hurled  
By the Goat from the light of the Sun,  
As She sinks in the mire of the Tarn,  
Even now — even now — even now !

*From the Unpublished Papers of McIntosh Jellaludin.*

"SAY is it dawn, is it dusk in thy Bower,  
Thou whom I long for, who longest for me ?  
Oh, be it night — be it — —"

## TO BE FILED FOR REFERENCE

Here he fell over a little camel-colt that was sleeping in the Serai where the horse-traders and the best of the blackguards from Central Asia live; and, because he was very drunk indeed and the night was dark, he could not rise again till I helped him. That was the beginning of my acquaintance with McIntosh Jellaludin. When a loafer, and drunk, sings "The Song of the Bower," he must be worth cultivating. He got off the camel's back and said, rather thickly, "I—I—I'm a bit screwed, but a dip in Loggerhead will put me right again; and, I say, have you spoken to Symonds about the mare's knees?"

Now Loggerhead was six thousand weary miles away from us, close to Mesopotamia, where you mustn't fish and poaching is impossible, and Charley Symonds' stable a half mile farther across the paddocks. It was strange to hear all the old names, on a May night, among the horses and camels of the Sultan Caravanserai. Then the man seemed to remember himself and sober down at the same time. He leaned against the camel and pointed to a corner of the Serai where a lamp was burning.

"I live there," said he, "and I should be extremely obliged if you would be good enough to help my mutinous feet thither; for I am more than usually drunk — most — most phenomenally tight. But not in respect to my head. 'My

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brain cries out against'—how does it go? But my head rides on the—rolls on the dunghill I should have said, and controls the qualm."

I helped him through the gangs of tethered horses and he collapsed on the edge of the verandah in front of the line of native quarters.

"Thanks—a thousand thanks! O Moon and little, little Stars! To think that a man should so shamelessly . . . Infamous liquor too. Ovid in exile drank no worse. Better. It was frozen. Alas! I had no ice. Good-night. I would introduce you to my wife were I sober—or she civilised."

A native woman came out of the darkness of the room, and began calling the man names; so I went away. He was the most interesting loafer that I had had the pleasure of knowing for a long time; and later on he became a friend of mine. He was a tall, well-built, fair man, fearfully shaken with drink, and he looked nearer fifty than the thirty-five which, he said, was his real age. When a man begins to sink in India, and is not sent Home by his friends as soon as may be, he falls very low from a respectable point of view. By the time that he changes his creed, as did McIntosh, he is past redemption.

In most big cities natives will tell you of two or three Sahibs, generally low-caste, who have turned Hindu or Mussulman, and who live more

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or less as such. But it is not often that you can get to know them. As McIntosh himself used to say, "If I change my religion for my stomach's sake, I do not seek to become a martyr to missionaries, nor am I anxious for notoriety."

At the outset of acquaintance McIntosh warned me. "Remember this. I am not an object for charity. I require neither your money, your food, nor your cast-off raiment. I am that rare animal, a self-supporting drunkard. If you choose, I will smoke with you, for the tobacco of the bazars does not, I admit, suit my palate; and I will borrow any books which you may not specially value. It is more than likely that I shall sell them for bottles of excessively filthy country-liquors. In return, you shall share such hospitality as my house affords. Here is a charpoy on which two can sit, and it is possible that there may, from time to time, be food in that platter. Drink, unfortunately, you will find on the premises at any hour: and thus I make you welcome to all my poor establishment."

I was admitted to the McIntosh household — I and my good tobacco. But nothing else. Unluckily, one cannot visit a loafer in the Serai by day. Friends buying horses would not understand it. Consequently, I was obliged to see McIntosh after dark. He laughed at this, and said simply, "You are perfectly right. When I en-



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joyed a position in society, rather higher than yours, I should have done exactly the same thing. Good Heavens! I was once"—he spoke as though he had fallen from the Command of a Regiment—"an Oxford Man!" This accounted for the reference to Charley Symonds' stable.

"You," said McIntosh slowly, "have not had that advantage; but, to outward appearance, you do not seem possessed of a craving for strong drinks. On the whole, I fancy that you are the luckier of the two. Yet I am not certain. You are—forgive my saying so even while I am smoking your excellent tobacco—painfully ignorant of many things."

We were sitting together on the edge of his bedstead, for he owned no chairs, watching the horses being watered for the night, while the native woman was preparing dinner. I did not like being patronised by a loafer, but I was his guest for the time being, though he owned only one very torn alpaca-coat and a pair of trousers made out of gunny-bags. He took the pipe out of his mouth, and went on judicially, "All things considered, I doubt whether you are the luckier. I do not refer to your extremely limited classical attainments, or your excruciating quantities, but to your gross ignorance of matters more immediately under your notice. That, for instance," he pointed to a woman cleaning a samovar near the



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well in the centre of the Serai. She was flicking the water out of the spout in regular cadenced jerks.

“There are ways and ways of cleaning samovars. If you knew why she was doing her work in that particular fashion, you would know what the Spanish Monk meant when he said —

I the Trinity illustrate,  
Drinking watered orange-pulp —  
In three sips the Arian frustrate,  
While he drains his at one gulp —

and many other things which now are hidden from your eyes. However, Mrs. McIntosh has prepared dinner. Let us come and eat after the fashion of the people of the country — of whom, by the way, you know nothing.”

The native woman dipped her hand in the dish with us. This was wrong. The wife should always wait until the husband has eaten. McIntosh Jellaludin apologised, saying —

“It is an English prejudice which I have not been able to overcome; and she loves me. Why, I have never been able to understand. I foregathered with her at Jullundur, three years ago, and she has remained with me ever since. I believe her to be moral, and know her to be skilled in cookery.”

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

He patted the woman's head as he spoke, and she cooed softly. She was not pretty to look at.

McIntosh never told me what position he had held before his fall. He was, when sober, a scholar and a gentleman. When drunk, he was rather more of the first than the second. He used to get drunk about once a week for two days. On those occasions the native woman tended him while he raved in all tongues except his own. One day, indeed, he began reciting "*Atalanta in Calydon*," and went through it to the end, beating time to the swing of the verse with a bedstead-leg. But he did most of his ravings in Greek or German. The man's mind was a perfect rag-bag of useless things. Once, when he was beginning to get sober, he told me that I was the only rational being in the Inferno into which he had descended—a Virgil in the Shades, he said—and that, in return for my tobacco, he would, before he died, give me the materials of a new Inferno that should make me greater than Dante. Then he fell asleep on a horse-blanket and woke up quite calm.

"Man," said he, "when you have reached the uttermost depths of degradation, little incidents which would vex a higher life are to you of no consequence. Last night my soul was among the Gods; but I make no doubt that my bestial body was writhing down here in the garbage."

## TO BE FILED FOR REFERENCE

“You were abominably drunk, if that’s what you mean,” I said.

“I *was* drunk — filthily drunk. I who am the son of a man with whom you have no concern — I who was once Fellow of a College whose buttery-hatch you have not seen. I was loathsomely drunk. But consider how lightly I am touched. It is nothing to me. Less than nothing; for I do not even feel the headache which should be my portion. Now, in a higher life, how ghastly would have been my punishment, how bitter my repentance! Believe me, my friend with the neglected education, the highest is as the lowest — always supposing each degree extreme.”

He turned round on the blanket, put his head between his fists, and continued —

“On the Soul which I have lost and on the Conscience which I have killed, I tell you that I cannot feel! I am as the Gods, knowing good and evil, but untouched by either. Is this enviable or is it not?”

When a man has lost the warning of “next morning’s head,” he must be in a bad state. I answered, looking at McIntosh on the blanket, with his hair over his eyes and his lips blue-white, that I did not think the insensibility good enough.

“For pity’s sake, don’t say that! I tell you, it *is* good and most enviable. Think of my consolations!”

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

“Have you so many, then, McIntosh?”

“Certainly; your attempts at sarcasm, which is essentially the weapon of a cultured man, are crude. First, my attainments, my classical and literary knowledge, blurred, perhaps, by immoderate drinking — which reminds me that before my soul went to the Gods last night, I sold the Pickering Horace you so kindly lent me. Ditta Mull the clothesman has it. It fetched ten annas, and may be redeemed for a rupee — but still infinitely superior to yours. Secondly, the abiding affection of Mrs. McIntosh, best of wives. Thirdly, a monument, more enduring than brass, which I have built up in the seven years of my degradation.”

He stopped here, and crawled across the room for a drink of water. He was very shaky and sick.

He referred several times to his “treasure” — some great possession that he owned — but I held this to be the raving of drink. He was as poor and as proud as he could be. His manner was not pleasant, but he knew enough about the natives, among whom seven years of his life had been spent, to make his acquaintance worth having. He used actually to laugh at Strickland as an ignorant man — “ignorant West and East” — he said. His boast was, first, that he was an Oxford man of rare and shining parts, which may or

## TO BE FILED FOR REFERENCE

may not have been true — I did not know enough to check his statements — and, secondly, that he “had his hand on the pulse of native life” — which was a fact. As an Oxford man, he struck me as a prig: he was always throwing his education about. As a Mohammedan *faqir* — as McIntosh Jellaludin — he was all that I wanted for my own ends. He smoked several pounds of my tobacco, and taught me several ounces of things worth knowing; but he would never accept any gifts; not even when the cold weather came, and gripped the poor thin chest under the poor thin alpaca-coat. He grew very angry, and said that I had insulted him, and that he was not going into hospital. He had lived like a beast and he would die rationally, like a man.

As a matter of fact, he died of pneumonia; and on the night of his death sent over a grubby note asking me to come and help him to die.

The native woman was weeping by the side of the bed. McIntosh, wrapped in a cotton cloth, was too weak to resent a fur coat being thrown over him. He was very active as far as his mind was concerned, and his eyes were blazing. When he had abused the Doctor who came with me, so foully that the indignant old fellow left, he cursed me for a few minutes and calmed down.

Then he told his wife to fetch out “The Book” from a hole in the wall. She brought out a big

## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

bundle, wrapped in the tail of a petticoat, of old sheets of miscellaneous notepaper, all numbered and covered with fine cramped writing. McIntosh ploughed his hand through the rubbish and stirred it up lovingly.

"This," he said, "is my work —the Book of McIntosh Jellaludin, showing what he saw and how he lived, and what befell him and others; being also an account of the life and sins and death of Mother Maturin. What Mirza Murad Ali Beg's book is to all other books on native life, will my work be to Mirza Murad Ali Beg's!"

This, as will be conceded by any one who knows Mirza Murad Ali Beg's book, was a sweeping statement. The papers did not look specially valuable; but McIntosh handled them as if they were currency-notes. Then said he slowly —

"In despite the many weaknesses of your education, you have been good to me. I will speak of your tobacco when I reach the Gods. I owe you much thanks for many kindnesses. But I abominate indebtedness. For this reason, I bequeath to you now the monument more enduring than brass — my one book — rude and imperfect in parts, but oh how rare in others! I wonder if you will understand it. It is a gift more honourable than . . . Bah! where is my brain rambling to? You will mutilate it horribly. You will knock out the gems you call Latin quotations, you



## TO BE FILED FOR REFERENCE

Philistine, and you will butcher the style to carve into your own jerky jargon; but you cannot destroy the whole of it. I bequeath it to you. Ethel . . . My brain again! . . . Mrs. McIntosh, bear witness that I give the Sahib all these papers. They would be of no use to you, Heart of my Heart; and I lay it upon you," he turned to me here, "that you do not let my book die in its present form. It is yours unconditionally — the story of McIntosh Jellaludin, which is *not* the story of McIntosh Jellaludin, but of a greater man than he, and of a far greater woman. Listen now! I am neither mad nor drunk! That book will make you famous."

I said, "Thank you," as the native woman put the bundle into my arms.

"My only baby!" said McIntosh, with a smile. He was sinking fast, but he continued to talk as long as breath remained. I waited for the end; knowing that, in six cases out of ten a dying man calls for his mother. He turned on his side and said —

"Say how it came into your possession. No one will believe you, but my name, at least, will live. You will treat it brutally, I know you will. Some of it must go; the public are fools and prudish fools. I was their servant once. But do your mangling gently — very gently. It is a great work, and I have paid for it in seven years' damnation."



## PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

His voice stopped for ten or twelve breaths, and then he began mumbling a prayer of some kind in Greek. The native woman cried very bitterly. Lastly, he rose in bed and said, as loudly as slowly—"Not guilty, my Lord!"

Then he fell back, and the stupor held him till he died. The native woman ran into the Serai among the horses, and screamed and beat her breasts; for she had loved him.

Perhaps his last sentence in life told what McIntosh had once gone through; but, saving the big bundle of old sheets in the cloth, there was nothing in his room to say who or what he had been.

The papers were in a hopeless muddle.

Strickland helped me to sort them, and he said that the writer was either an extreme liar or a most wonderful person. He thought the former. One of these days, you may be able to judge for yourselves. The bundle needed much expurgation and was full of Greek nonsense, at the head of the chapters, which has all been cut out.

If the thing is ever published, some one may perhaps remember this story, now printed as a safeguard to prove that McIntosh Jellaludin and not I myself wrote the Book of Mother Maturin.

I don't want the *Giant's Robe* to come true in my case.

**SOLDIERS THREE AND MILITARY TALES**

**PART I**



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# SOLDIERS THREE

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

An' when the war began, we chased the bold Afghan,  
An' we made the bloomin' Ghazi for to flee, boys O!  
An' we marched into *Kabul*, an' we tuk the Balar 'Issar  
An' we taught 'em to respec' the British Soldier.

*Barrack Room Ballad.*

MULVANEY, Ortheris and Learoyd are Privates in B Company of a Line Regiment, and personal friends of mine. Collectively I think, but am not certain, they are the worst men in the regiment so far as genial blackguardism goes.

They told me this story in the Umballa Refreshment Room while we were waiting for an up-train. I supplied the beer. The tale was cheap at a gallon and a half.

All men know Lord Benira Trig. He is a Duke, or an Earl, or something unofficial; also a Peer; also a Globe-trotter. On all three counts, as Ortheris says, "e didn't deserve no consideration." He was out in India for three months

## SOLDIERS THREE

collecting materials for a book on "Our Eastern Impedimenta," and quartering himself upon everybody, like a Cossack in evening dress.

His particular vice—because he was a Radical, men said—was having garrisons turned out for his inspection. He would then dine with the Officer Commanding, and insult him, across the Mess table, about the appearance of the troops. That was Benira's way.

He turned out troops once too often. He came to Helanthami Cantonment on a Tuesday. He wished to go shopping in the bazars on Wednesday, and he "desired" the troops to be turned out on a Thursday. *On—a—Thursday.* The Officer Commanding could not well refuse; for Benira was a Lord. There was an indignation-meeting of subalterns in the Mess Room, to call the Colonel pet names.

"But the rale dimonstrashin," said Mulvaney, "was in B Comp'ny barrick; we three headin' it."

Mulvaney climbed on to the refreshment-bar, settled himself comfortably by the beer, and went on, "Whin the row was at uts foineest an' B Comp'ny was fur goin' out to murther this man Thrigg on the p'rade-groun', Learoyd here takes up his helmut an' sez—fwhat was ut ye said?"

"Ah said," said Learoyd, "gie us t' brass. Tak oop a subscripshun, lads, for to put off t' p'rade, an' if t' p'rade's not put off, ah'll gie t' brass back



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agean. Thot's wot ah said. All B Coomp'ny knawed me. Ah took oop a big subscripshun — fower rupees eight annas 'twas — an' ah went oot to turn t' job over. Mulvaney an' Orth'ris coom with me."

"We three raises the Divil in couples gin'rally," explained Mulvaney.

Here Ortheris interrupted. "'Ave you read the papers?" said he.

"Sometimes," I said.

"We 'ad read the papers, an' we put hup a faked decoity, a — a sedukshun."

"*Abdukshin*, ye cockney," said Mulvaney.

"*Abdukshun* or *sedukshun* — no great odds. Any'ow, we arranged to taik an' put Mister Benhira out o' the way till Thursday was hover, or 'e too busy to rux 'isself about p'raids. *Hi* was the man wot said, 'We'll make a few rupees off o' the business.'"

"We hild a Council av War," continued Mulvaney, "walkin' roun' by the Artill'ry Lines. I was Prisidint, Learoyd was Minister av Finance, an' little Orth'ris here was ——"

"A bloomin' Bismarck! *Hi* made the 'ole show pay."

"This interferin' bit av a Benira man," said Mulvaney, "did the thrick for us himself; for, on me sowl, we hadn't a notion av what was to come afther the next minut. He was shoppin' in the bazar on fut. 'Twas dhrawin' dusk thin, an' we

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stud watchin' the little man hoppin' in an' out av the shops, thryin' to injuce the naygurs to *mallum* his *bat*. Prisintly, he sthrols up, his arrums full av thruck, an' he sez in a consiquinshal way, shtick-ing out his little belly, 'Me good men,' sez he, 'have ye seen the Kernel's b'roosh?' — 'B'roosh?' says Learoyd. 'There's no b'roosh here — nobbut a *bekka*.' — 'Fwhat's that?' sez Thrigg. Learoyd shows him wan down the sthreet, an' he sez, 'How thruly Orientil! I will ride on a *bekka*.' I saw thin that our Rigimintal Saint was for givin' Thrigg over to us neck an' brisket. I purshued a *bekka*, an' I sez to the dhriver-divil, I sez, 'Ye black limb, there's a Sahib comin' for this *bekka*. He wants to go *jildi* to the Padsahi Jhil' — 'twas about tu moiles away — 'to shoot snipe — *chirria*. You dhrive *Jebannum ke marfik, mallum* — like Hell? 'Tis no manner av use *bukkin'* to the Sahib, bekaze he doesn't *samjao* your talk. Av he *bolos* anything, just you *choop* and *chel*. Dekker? Go *arsty* for the first *arder*-mile from cantonmints. Thin *chel*, *Shaitan ke marfik*, an' the *chooper* you *choops* an' the *jildier* you *chels* the better *kooshy* will that Sahib be; an' here's a rupee for ye.'

"The *bekka*-man knew there was somethin' out av the common in the air. He grinned an' sez, 'Bote *achee*! I goin' damn fast.' I prayed that the Kernel's b'roosh wudn't arrive till me darlin' Benira by the grace av God was undher weigh.

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

The little man puts his thruck into the *bekka* an' scuttles in like a fat guinea-pig; niver offerin' us the price av a dhrink for our services in helpin' him home. 'He's off to the Padsahi Jhil,' sez I to the others."

Ortheris took up the tale.

"Jist then, little Buldoo kim up, 'oo was the son of one of the Artillery grooms — 'e would 'ave made a 'evinly newspaper-boy in London, bein' sharp an' fly to all manner o' games. 'E 'ad bin watchin' us puttin' Mister Benhira into 'is temporary baroush, an' 'e sez, 'What 'ave you been a doin' of, Sahibs?' sez 'e. Learoyd 'e caught 'im by the ear an' 'e sez —"

"Ah says," went on Learoyd, "'Young mon, that mon's gooin' to have t' goons out o' Thursday — to-morrow — an' thot's more work for you, young mon. Now, sitha, tak' a *tat* an' a *lookri*, an' ride tha domdest to t' Padsahi Jhil. Cotch thot there *bekka*, and tell t' driver in your lingo thot you've coom to tak' his place. T' Sahib doesn't speak t' *bat*, an' he's a little mon. Drive t' *bekka* into t' Padsahi Jhil into t' watter. Leave t' Sahib theer an' roon hoam; an' here's a rupee for tha.'"

Then Mulvaney and Ortheris spoke together in alternate fragments: Mulvaney leading [You must pick out the two speakers as best you can]: — "He was a knowin' little divil was Bhuldoo, — 'e sez *bote achee* an' cuts — wid a wink in his oi

## SOLDIERS THREE

—but *Hi* sez there's money to be made — an' I wanted to see the ind av the campaign — so *Hi* says we'll double hout to the Padsahi Jhil — an' save the little man from bein' dacoited by the murtherin' Bhuldoo — an' turn hup like reskooers in a Vic'oria Melodrama — so we doubled for the *jbil*, an' prisintly there was the divil av a hurroosh behind us an' three bhoys on grasscuts' ponies come by, poundin' along for the dear life — s'elp me Bob, hif Buldoo 'adn't raised a rig'lar *barmy* of decoits — to do the job in shtile. An' we ran, an' they ran, shplittin' with laughin', till we gets near the *jbil* — and 'ears sounds of distress floatin' mol-loncolly on the hevenin' hair." [Ortheris was growin' poetical under the influence of the beer. The duet recommenced: Mulvaney leading again.]

"Thin we heard Bhuldoo, the dacoit, shoutin' to the *bekka* man, an' wan of the young divils brought his stick down on the top av the *bekka*-cover, an' Benira Thrigg inside howled 'Murther an' Death.' Bhuldoo takes the reins and dhrives like mad for the *jbil*, havin' dishpersed the *bekka*-dhriver — 'oo come up to us an' 'e sez, sez 'e, 'That Sahib's nigh mad with funk! Wot devil's work 'ave you led me into?' — 'Hall right,' sez we, 'you catch that there pony an' come along. This Sahib's been decoited, an' we're goin' to resky 'im!' Says the driver, 'Decoits! Wot decoits? That's Buldoo the *budmask*' — 'Bhuldoo be shot!'

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

sez we. ‘’Tis a woild dissolute Pathan frum the hills. There’s about eight av thim coercin’ the Sahib. You remimbir that an’ you’ll get another rupee!’ Thin we heard the *whop-whop-whop* av the *bekka* turnin’ over, an’ a splash av water, an’ the voice av Benira Thrigg callin’ upon God to forgive his sins — an’ Buldoo an’ ’is friends squotterin’ in the water like boys in the Serpentine.”

Here the Three Musketeers retired simultaneously into the beer.

“Well? What came next?” said I.

“Fwhat nex’?” answered Mulvaney, wiping his mouth. “Wud ye let three bould sodger-bhoys lave the ornamint av the House av Lords to be dhrowned an’ dacoited in a *jbil*? We formed line av quarther-column an’ we discinded upon the inimy. For the better part av tin minutes you could not hear yerself spake. The *tattoo* was screamin’ in chune wid Benira Thrigg an’ Bhuldoo’s army, an’ the shticks was whistlin’ roun’ the *bekka*, an’ Orth’ris was beatin’ the *bekka*-cover wid his fistes, an’ Learoyd yellin’, ‘Look out for their knives!’ an’ me cuttin’ into the dark, right an’ lef’, dishpersin’ arrmy corps av Pathans. Holy Mother av Moses! ’twas more disp’rit than Ahmid Kheyl wid Maiwund thrown in. Aftther a while Bhuldoo an’ his bhoys flees. Have ye iver seen a rale live Lord thryin’ to hide his nobility undher a fut an’ a half av brown swamp-wather? ’Tis the

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livin' image av a water-carrier's goatskin wid the shivers. It tuk toime to pershuade me frind Benira he was not disimbowilled: an' more toime to get out the *bekka*. The dhriver come up afther the battle, swearin' he tuk a hand in repulsin' the inimy. Benira was sick wid the fear. We escorted him back, very slow, to cantonmints, for that an' the chill to soak into him. It suk! Glory be to the Rigimintal Saint, but it suk to the marrow av Lord Benira Thrigg!"

Here Ortheris, slowly, with immense pride — "'E sez, ' You har my noble preservers,' sez 'e. ' You har a *honour* to the British Army,' sez 'e. With that he describes the hawful band of decoits wot set on 'im. There was about forty of 'em, an' 'e was hoverpowered by numbers, so 'e was; but 'e never lorst 'is presence of mind, so 'e didn't. 'E guv the *bekka*-driver five rupees for 'is noble assistance, an' 'e said 'e would see to us after 'e 'ad spoken to the Kernul. For we was a *honour* to the Regiment, we was."

"An' we three," said Mulvaney, with a seraphic smile, "have dhrawn the par-ti-cu-lar attinshin av Bobs Bahadur more than wanst. But he's a rale good little man, is Bobs. Go on, Orth'ris, my son."

"Then we leaves 'im at the Kernul's 'ouse, werry sick, an' we cuts hover to B Comp'ny bar-rick, an' we sez we 'ave saved Benhira from a



## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

bloody doom, an' the chances was agin there bein' p'raid on Thursday. About ten minutes later come three envelicks, one for each of us. S'elp me Bob, if the old bloke 'adn't guv us a fiver apiece — sixty-four rupees in the bazar! On Thursday 'e was in 'orspital recoverin' from 'is sanguinary encounter with a gang of Pathans, an' B Comp'ny was drinkin' 'emselves into Clink by squads. So there never was no Thursday p'raid. But the Kernul, when 'e 'eard of our galliant conduct, 'e sez, 'Hi know there's been some devilry somewheres,' sez 'e, 'but I can't bring it 'ome to you three.'"

"An' my privit imprisshin is," said Mulvaney, getting off the bar and turning his glass upside down, "that, av they had known, they wudn't have brought ut home. 'Tis flyin' in the face, firstly av Nature, secon' av the Rig'lations, an' third the will av Terence Mulvaney, to hold p'rades av Thursdays."

"Good, ma son!" said Learoyd; "but, young mon, what's t' notebook for?"

"Let be," said Mulvaney; "this time next month we're in the *Sherapis*. 'Tis immortal fame the gentleman's goin' to give us. But kape it dhark till we're out av the range av me little frind Bobs Bahadur."

And I have obeyed Mulvaney's order.



## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNG PEN

So we loosed a bloomin' volley,  
An' we made the beggars cut,  
An' when our pouch was emptied out,  
We used the bloomin' butt,  
Ho ! My !  
Don't yer come anigh,  
When Tommy is a playin' with the baynit an' the butt.  
*Barrack Room Ballad.*

My friend Private Mulvaney told me this, sitting on the parapet of the road to Dagshai, when we were hunting butterflies together. He had theories about the Army, and coloured clay pipes perfectly. He said that the young soldier is the best to work with, "on account av the surpassing innocence av the child."

"Now, listen!" said Mulvaney, throwing himself full length on the wall in the sun. "I'm a born scutt av the barrick-room! The Army's mate an' dhrink to me, bekaze I'm wan av the few that can't quit ut. I've put in sivinteen years, an' the pipeclay's in the marrow av me. Av I cud have kept out av wan big dhrink a month, I wud have been a Hon'ry Lift'nint by this time—a

## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN

nuisance to my betthers, a laughin'-shtock to my equils, an' a curse to meself. Bein' fwhat I am, I'm Privit Mulvaney, wid no good-conduc' pay an' a devourin' thirst. Always barrin' me little frind Bobs Bahadur, I know as much about the Army as most men."

I said something here.

"Wolseley be shot! Betune you an' me an' that butterfly net, he's a ramblin', incoherint sort av a divil, wid wan oi on the Quane an' the Coort, an' the other on his blessed silf—everlastin'ly playing Saysar an' Alexandrier rowled into a lump. Now Bobs is a sinsible little man. Wid Bobs an' a few three-year-olds, I'd swape any army av the earth into a towel, an' throw it away afterwards. Faith, I'm not jokin'! 'Tis the bhoys—the raw bhoys—that don't know fwhat a bullut manes, an' wudn't care av they did—that dhu the work. They're crammed wid bull-mate till they fairly *ramps* wid good livin'; and thin, av they don't fight, they blow each other's hids off. 'Tis the trut' I'm tellin' you. They shud be kept on water an' rice in the hot weather; but there'd be a mut'ny av 'twas done.

"Did ye iver hear how Privit Mulvaney tuk the town av Lungtungpen? I thought not! 'Twas the Lift'nint got the credit; but 'twas me planned the schame. A little before I was inviladed from Burma, me an' four-an'-twenty young wans un-

## SOLDIERS THREE

dher a Lift'nint Brazenose, was ruinin' our dijeshins thryin' to catch dacoits. An' such double-ended divils I niver knew! 'Tis only a *dab* an' a Snider that makes a dacoit. Widout thim, he's a peaceful cultivator, an' felony for to shoot. We hunted, an' we hunted, an' tuk fever an' elephints now an' again; but no dacoits. Evenshually, we *puckarowed* wan man. 'Trate him tinderly,' sez the Lift'nint. So I tuk him away into the jungle, wid the Burmese Interprut'r an' my clanin'-rod. Sez I to the man, 'My peaceful squireen,' sez I, 'you shquot on your hunkers an' dimonstrate to *my* frind here, where *your* frinds are whin they're at home.' Wid that I introjuced him to the clanin'-rod, an' he comminst to jabber; the Interprut'r interprutin' in between, an' me helpin' the Intilligence Departmint wid my clanin'-rod whin the man misremimbered.

"Prisintly, I learn that, acrost the river, about nine miles away, was a town just dhrippin' wid dahs, an' bohs an' arrows, an' dacoits, an' elephints, an' *jingles*. 'Good!' sez I; 'this office will now close!'

"That night, I went to the Lift'nint an' communicates my information. I never thought much of Lift'nint Brazenose till that night. He was shtiff wid books an' the-ouries, an' all manner av thrimmin's no manner av use. 'Town did ye say?' sez he. 'Accordin' to the the-ouries av

## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN

'War, we shud wait for reinforcemints.'—'Faith!' thinks I, 'we'd betther dig our graves thin'; for the nearest throops was up to their shtocks in the marshes out Mimbu way. 'But,' says the Lift'nint, 'since 'tis a speshil case, I'll make an excepshin. We'll visit this Lungtungpen to-night.'

"The bhoys was fairly woild wid deloight whin I tould 'em; an', by this an' that, they wint through the jungle like buck-rabbits. About midnight we come to the shtrame which I had clane forgot to minshin to my orficer. I was on, ahead, wid four bhoys, an' I thought that the Lift'nint might want to the-ourise. 'Shtrip, bhoys!' sez I. 'Shtrip to the buff, an' shwim in where glory waits!'—'But I *can't* shwim!' sez two av thim. 'To think I should live to hear that from a bhoy wid a board-school edukashin!' sez I. 'Take a lump av thimber, an' me an' Conolly here will ferry ye over, ye young ladies!'

"We got an ould tree-trunk, an' pushed off wid the kits an' the rifles on it. The night was chokin' dhark, an' just as we was fairly embarked I heard the Lift'nint behind av me callin' out. 'There's a bit av a *nullab* here, Sorr,' sez I, 'but I can feel the bottom already.' So I cud, for I was not a yard from the bank.

"'Bit av a *nullab*! Bit av an eshtuary!' sez the Lift'nint. 'Go on, ye mad Irishman! Shtrip bhoys!' I heard him laugh; an' the bhoys begun

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shtrippin' an' rollin' a log into the wather to put their kits on. So me an' Conolly shtruck out through the warm wather wid our log, an' the rest come on behind.

"That shtrame was miles woide! Orth'ris, on the rear-rank log, whispers we had got into the Thames below Sheerness by mistake. 'Kape on shwimmin', ye little blayguard,' sez I, 'an' don't go pokin' your dirty jokes at the Irriwaddy.'— 'Silince, men!' sings out the Lift'nint. So we shwum on into the black dhark, wid our chests on the logs, trustin' in the Saints an' the luck av the British Army.

"Evenshually, we hit ground — a bit av sand — an' a man. I put my heel on the back av him. He skreeched an' ran.

"*'Now we've done it!'* sez Lift'nint Brazenose. 'Where the divil *is* Lungtungpen?' There was about a minute and a half to wait. The bhoys laid a hould av their rifles an' some thried to put their belts on; we was marchin' wid fixed baynits av coorse. Thin we knew where Lungtungpen was; for we had hit the river-wall av it in the dhark, an' the whole town blazed wid thim messin' *jingles* an' Sniders like a cat's back on a frosty night. They was firin' all ways at wanst; but over our hids into the shtrame.

"*'Have you got your rifles?'* sez Brazenose. 'Got 'em!' sez Orth'ris. 'I've got that thief Mul-

## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN

vaney's for all my back-pay, an' she'll kick my heart sick wid that blunderin' long shtock av hers.' —'Go on!' yells Brazenose, whippin' his sword out. 'Go on an' take the town! An' the Lord have mercy on our sows!'

"Thin the bhoys gave wan divastatin' howl, an' pranced into the dhark, feelin' for the town, an' blindin' an' stiffin' like Cavalry Ridin' Masters whin the grass pricked their bare legs. I hammered wid the butt at some bamboo-thing that felt wake, an' the rest come an' hammered contagious, while the *jingles* was jingling, an' feroshus yells from inside was shplittin' our ears. We was too close under the wall for thim to hurt us.

"Evenshually, the thing, whatever ut was, bruk; an' the six-and-twinty av us tumbled, wan after the other, naked as we was borrun, into the town of Lungtungpen. There was a *melly* av a sumpshus kind for a whoile; but whether they tuk us, all white an' wet, for a new breed av divil, or a new kind av dacoit, I don't know. They ran as though we was both, an' we wint into thim, baynit an' butt, shriekin' wid laughin'. There was torches in the shtreets, an' I saw little Orth'ris rubbin' his showlther ivry time he loosed my long-shtock Martini; an' Brazenose walkin' into the gang wid his sword, like Diarmid av the Gowlden Collar—barring he hadn't a stitch av clothin' on him. We diskivered elephints wid dacoits under their bel-



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lies, an', what wid wan thing an' another, we was busy till mornin' takin' possession av the town of Lungtungpen.

"Thin we halted an' formed up, the wimmen howlin' in the houses an' Lift'nint Brazenose blushin' pink in the light av the mornin' sun. 'Twas the most ondasint p'rade I iver tuk a hand in. Foive-and-twinty privits an' a orficer av the Line in review ordher, an' not as much as wud dust a fife betune 'em all in the way of clothin'! Eight av us had their belts an' pouches on; but the rest had gone in wid a handful av cartridges an' the skin God gave thim. *They* was as nakid as Vanus.

"'Number off from the right!' sez the Lift'nint. 'Odd numbers fall out to dress; even numbers pathrol the town till relieved by the dressing party.' Let me tell you, pathrollin' a town wid nothing on is an *expayrience*. I pathrolled for tin minutes, an' begad, before 't was over, I blushed. The wimmen laughed so. I niver blushed before or since; but I blushed all over my carkiss thin. Orth'ris didn't pathrol. He sez only, 'Portsmith Barricks an' the 'Ard av a Sunday!' Thin he lay down an' rowled any ways wid laughin'.

"Whin we was all dhressed we counted the dead — sivynty-foive dacoits besides wounded. We tuk five elephints, a hundher' an' sivynty Sniders, two hundher' dahs, and a lot av other bur-



## THE TAKING OF LUNGTUNGPEN

glorious thruck. Not a man av us was hurt — excep' maybe the Lift'nint, an' he from the shock to his dasincy.

“The Headman av Lungtungpen, who surrender'd himself, asked the Interpret'r — ‘Av the English fight like that wid their clo'es off, what in the wurruld do they do wid their clo'es on?’ Orth'ris began rowlin' his eyes an' crackin' his fingers an' dancin' a step-dance for to impress the Headman. He ran to his house; an' we spint the rest av the day carryin' the Lift'nint on our showl-thers round the town, an' playin' wid the Burmese babies — fat little, brown little divils, as pretty as picturs.

“Whin I was inviladed for the dysent'ry to India, I sez to the Lift'nint, ‘Sorr,’ sez I, ‘you’ve the makin’s in you av a great man; but, av you’ll let an ould sodger spake, you’re too fond of the-ourisin’.’ He shuk hands wid me and sez, ‘Hit high, hit low, there’s no plasins’ you, Mulvaney. You’ve seen me waltzin’ through Lungtungpen like a red Injin widout the war-paint, an’ you say I’m too fond av the-ourisin’?’ ‘Sorr,’ sez I, for I loved the bhoy, ‘I wud waltz wid you in that condishin through *Hell*, an’ so wud the rest av the men!’ Thin I wint downshtrame in the flat an’ left him my blessin’. May the Saints carry ut where ut shud go, for he was a fine upstandin’ young orficer.

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“To reshume. Fwhat I’ve said jist shows the use av three-year-olds. Wud fifty seasoned sodgers have taken Lungtungpen in the dhark that way? No! They’d know the risk av fever and chill. Let alone the shootin’. Two hundher’ might have done ut. But the three-year-olds know little an’ care less; an’ where there’s no fear, there’s no danger. Catch thim young, feed thim high, an’ by the honour av that great little man Bobs, behind a good orficer ’tisn’t only dacoits they’d smash wid their clo’es off— ’tis Con-ti-ental Ar-r-r-mies! They tuk Lungtungpen nakid; an’ they’d take St. Pethersburg in their dhrawers! Begad, they would that!

“Here’s your pipe, Sorr. Shmoke her tinderly wid honey-dew, afther letting the reek av the Canteen plug die away. But ’tis no good, thanks to you all the same, fillin’ my pouch wid your chopped hay. Canteen ’baccy’s like the Army. It shpoils a man’s taste for moilder things.”

So saying, Mulvaney took up his butterfly-net, and returned to barracks.

## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

Oh ! Where would I be when my froat was dry ?

Oh ! Where would I be when the bullets fly ?

Oh ! Where would I be when I come to die ?

Why,

Somewheres anigh my chum.

If 'e's liquor 'e'll give me some,

If I'm dyin' 'e'll 'old my 'ead,

An' 'e'll write 'em 'Ome when I'm dead.—

Gawd send us a trusty chum !

*Barrack Room Ballad.*

My friends Mulvaney and Ortheris had gone on a shooting-expedition for one day. Learoyd was still in hospital, recovering from fever picked up in Burma. They sent me an invitation to join them, and were genuinely pained when I brought beer — almost enough beer to satisfy two Privates of the Line . . . and Me.

“ ’Twasn’t for that we bid you welkim, Sorr,” said Mulvaney sulkily. “ ’Twas for the pleasure av your comp’ny.”

Ortheris came to the rescue with — “ Well, ’e won’t be none the worse for bringin’ liquor with ’im. We ain’t a file o’ Dooks. We’re bloomin’

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Tommies, ye cantankris Hirishman ; an' 'ere's your very good 'ealth !”

We shot all the forenoon, and killed two pariah-dogs, four green parrots sitting, one kite by the burning-ghaut, one snake flying, one mud-turtle, and eight crows. Game was plentiful. Then we sat down to tiffin — “bull-mate an' bran-bread,” Mulvaney called it — by the side of the river, and took pot shots at the crocodiles in the intervals of cutting up the food with our only pocket-knife. Then we drank up all the beer, and threw the bottles into the water and fired at them. After that, we eased belts and stretched ourselves on the warm sand and smoked. We were too lazy to continue shooting.

Ortheris heaved a big sigh, as he lay on his stomach with his head between his fists. Then he swore quietly into the blue sky.

“Fwhat's that for ?” said Mulvaney. “Have ye not drunk enough ?”

“Tott'nim Court Road, an' a gal I fancied there. Wot's the good of sodgerin' ?”

“Orth'ris, me son,” said Mulvaney hastily, “'tis more than likely you've got throuble in your inside wid the beer. I feel that way mesilf whin my liver gets rusty.”

Ortheris went on slowly, not heeding the interruption —

“I'm a Tommy — a bloomin', eight-anna, dog-

## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

stealin' Tommy, with a number instead of a decent name. Wot's the good o' me? If I 'ad a stayed at 'Ome, I might a married that gal and a kep' a little shorp in the 'Ammersmith 'Igh.—'S. Orth'ris. Prac-ti-cal Taxi-der-mist.' With a stuff' fox, like they 'as in the Haylesbury Dairies, in the winder, an' a little case of blue and yaller glass-heyas, an' a little wife to call 'shorp!' 'shorp!' when the door-bell rung. As it *his*, I'm on'y a Tommy—a Bloomin', Gawd-forsaken, Beer-swillin' Tommy. 'Rest on your harms—*'versed*; Stan' at—*bease*; 'Shun. 'Verse—*harms*. Right an' lef—*tarrn*. Slow—*march*. 'Alt—*front*. Rest on your harms—*'versed*. With blank cartridge—*load*.' An' that's the end o' me." He was quoting fragments from Funeral Parties' Orders.

"Stop ut!" shouted Mulvaney. "Whin you've fired into nothin' as often as me, over a better man than yoursilf, you will not make a mock av thim orders. 'Tis worse than whistlin' the 'Dead March' in barricks. An' you full as a tick, an' the sun cool, an' all an' all! I take shame for you. You're no better than a Pagin—you an' your firin'-parties an' your glass-eyes. Won't *you* stop ut, Sorr?"

What could I do? Could I te'l Ortheris any-thing that he did not know of the pleasures of his life? I was not a Chaplain nor a Subaltern, and Ortheris had a right to speak as he thought fit.

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"Let him run, Mulvaney," I said. "It's the beer."

"No! 'Tisn't the beer," said Mulvaney. "I know fwhat's comin'. He's tuk this way now an' agin, an' it's bad — it's bad — for I'm fond av the bhoy."

Indeed, Mulvaney seemed needlessly anxious; but I knew that he looked after Ortheris in a fatherly way.

"Let me talk, let me talk," said Ortheris dreamily. "D'you stop your parrit screamin' of a 'ot day, when the cage is a-cookin' 'is pore little pink toes orf, Mulvaney?"

"Pink toes! D'ye mane to say you've pink toes undher your bullswools, ye blandanderin'" — Mulvaney gathered himself together for a terrific denunciation — "school-misthress! Pink toes! How much Bass wid the label did that ravin' child dhrink?"

"'Taint Bass," said Ortheris. "It's a bitterer beer nor that. It's 'ome-sickness!"

"Hark to him! An' he goin' Home in the *Sherapis* in the inside av four months!"

"I don't care. It's all one to me. 'Ow d'you know I ain't 'fraid o' dyin' 'fore I gets my discharge paipers?" He recommenced, in a sing-song voice, the Orders.

I had never seen this side of Ortheris' character before, but evidently Mulvaney had, and attached

## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

serious importance to it. While Ortheris babbled, with his head on his arms, Mulvaney whispered to me —

“He’s always tuk this way whin he’s been checked overmuch by the childher they make Sارجints nowadays. That an’ havin’ nothin’ to do. I can’t make ut out anyways.”

“Well, what does it matter? Let him talk himself through.”

Ortheris began singing a parody of “The Ramrod Corps,” full of cheerful allusions to battle, murder, and sudden death. He looked out across the river as he sang; and his face was quite strange to me. Mulvaney caught me by the elbow to ensure attention.

“Matther? It matthers everything! ’Tis some sort av fit that’s on him. I’ve seen ut. ’Twill hould him all this night, an’ in the middle av it he’ll get out av his cot an’ go rakin’ in the rack for his ’coutremints. Thin he’ll come over to me an’ say, ‘I’m goin’ to Bombay. Answer for me in the mornin’.’ Thin me an’ him will fight as we’ve done before — him to go an’ me to hould him — an’ so we’ll both come on the books for disturbin’ in barricks. I’ve belted him, an’ I’ve bruk his head, an’ I’ve talked to him, but ’tis no manner av use whin the fit’s on him. He’s as good a bhoy as ever stepped whin his mind’s clear. I know fwhat’s comin’, though, this night in bar-



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ricks. Lord send he doesn't loose on me whin I rise to knock him down. 'Tis that that's in my mind day an' night."

This put the case in a much less pleasant light, and fully accounted for Mulvaney's anxiety. He seemed to be trying to coax Ortheris out of the fit; for he shouted down the bank where the boy was lying —

"Listen now, you wid the 'pore pink toes' an' the glass eyes! Did you shwim the Irriwaddy at night, behin' me, as a bhoy shud; or were you hidin' under a bed, as you was at Ahmid Kheyl?"

This was at once a gross insult and a direct lie, and Mulvaney meant it to bring on a fight. But Ortheris seemed shut up in some sort of trance. He answered slowly, without a sign of irritation, in the same cadenced voice as he had used for his firing-party orders —

"*Hi* swum the Irriwaddy in the night as you know, for to take the town of Lungtungpen, nakid an' without fear. *Hand* where I was at Ahmed Kheyl you know, and four bloomin' Pathans know too. But that was summat to do, an' I didn't think o' dyin'. Now I'm sick to go 'Ome — go 'Ome — go 'Ome! No, I ain't mammalsick, because my uncle brung me up, but I'm sick for London again; sick for the sounds of 'er, an' the sights of 'er, and the stinks of 'er; orange-peel and hasphalte

## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

an' gas comin' in over Vaux'all Bridge. Sick for the rail goin' down to Box 'Ill with your gal on your knee an' a new clay pipe in your face. That, an' the Stran' lights where you knows ev'ry one, an' the Copper that takes you up is a old friend that tuk you up before, when you was a little, smitchy boy lying loose 'tween the Temple an' the Dark Harches. No bloomin' guard-mountin', no bloomin' rotten-stone, nor khaki, an' yourself your own master with a gal to take an' see the Humaners practisin' a-hookin' dead corpses out of the Serpentine o' Sundays. An' I lef' all that for to serve the Widder beyond the seas, where there ain't no women and there ain't no liquor worth 'avin', and there ain't nothin' to see, nor do, nor say, nor feel, nor think. Lord love you, Stanley Orth'ris, but you're a bigger bloomin' fool than the rest o' the reg'ment and Mulvaney wired together! There's the Widder sittin' at 'Ome with a gold crownd on 'er 'ead; and 'ere am Hi, Stanley Orth'ris, the Widder's property, a rottin' FOOL!"

His voice rose at the end of the sentence, and he wound up with a six-shot Anglo-Vernacular oath. Mulvaney said nothing, but looked at me as if he expected that I could bring peace to poor Ortheris' troubled brain.

I remembered once at Rawal Pindi having seen a man, nearly mad with drink, sobered by being

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made a fool of. Some regiments may know what I mean. I hoped that we might slake off Ortheris in the same way, though he was perfectly sober. So I said —

“What’s the use of grousing there, and speaking against the Widow?”

“I didn’t!” said Ortheris. “S’elp me Gawd, I never said a word agin’er, an’ I wouldn’t — not if I was to desert this minute!”

Here was my opening. “Well, you meant to, anyhow. What’s the use of cracking-on for nothing? Would you slip it now if you got the chance?”

“On’y try me!” said Ortheris, jumping to his feet as if he had been stung.

Mulvaney jumped too. “Fwhat are you going to do?” said he.

“Help Ortheris down to Bombay or Karachi, whichever he likes. You can report that he separated from you before tiffin, and left his gun on the bank here!”

“I’m to report that — am I?” said Mulvaney slowly. “Very well. If Orth’ris manes to desert now, and will desert now, an’ you, Sorr, who have been a frind to me an’ to him, will help him to ut, I, Terence Mulvaney, on my oath which I’ve never bruk yet, will report as you say. But —” here he stepped up to Ortheris, and shook the stock of the fowling-piece in his face — “your

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fistes help you, Stanley Orth'ris, if ever I come across you agin!"

"I don't care!" said Ortheris. "I'm sick o' this dorg's life. Give me a chanst. Don't play with me. Le' me go!"

"Strip," said I, "and change with me, and then I'll tell you what to do."

I hoped that the absurdity of this would check Ortheris; but he had kicked off his ammunition-boots and got rid of his tunic almost before I had loosed my shirt-collar. Mulvaney gripped me by the arm —

"The fit's on him: the fit's workin' on him still! By my Honour and Sowl, we shall be accessiry to a desartion yet. Only twenty-eight days, as you say, Sorr, or fifty-six, but think o' the shame — the black shame to him an' me!" I had never seen Mulvaney so excited.

But Ortheris was quite calm, and as soon as he had exchanged clothes with me, and I stood up a Private of the Line, he said shortly, "Now! Come on. What nex'? D'ye mean fair? What must I do to get out o' this 'ere a-Hell?"

I told him that, if he would wait for two or three hours near the river, I would ride into the Station and come back with one hundred rupees. He would, with that money in his pocket, walk to the nearest side-station on the line, about five miles away, and would there take a first-class ticket for

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Karachi. Knowing that he had no money on him when he went out shooting, his regiment would not immediately wire to the seaports, but would hunt for him in the native villages near the river. Further, no one would think of seeking a deserter in a first-class carriage. At Karachi he was to buy white clothes and ship, if he could, on a cargo-steamer.

Here he broke in. If I helped him to Karachi, he would arrange all the rest. Then I ordered him to wait where he was until it was dark enough for me to ride into the Station without my dress being noticed. Now God in His wisdom has made the heart of the British Soldier, who is very often an unlicked ruffian, as soft as the heart of a little child, in order that he may believe in and follow his officers into tight and nasty places. He does not so readily come to believe in a "civilian," but, when he does, he believes implicitly and like a dog. I had had the honour of the friendship of Private Ortheris, at intervals, for more than three years, and we had dealt with each other as man by man. Consequently, he considered that all my words were true, and not spoken lightly.

Mulvaney and I left him in the high grass near the river-bank, and went away, still keeping to the high grass, towards my horse. The shirt scratched me horribly.

## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

We waited nearly two hours for the dusk to fall and allow me to ride off. We spoke of Ortheris in whispers, and strained our ears to catch any sound from the spot where we had left him. But we heard nothing except the wind in the plume-grass.

"I've bruk his head," said Mulvaney earnestly, "time an' agin. I've nearly kilt him wid the belt, an' *yet* I can't knock thim fits out av his soft head. No! An' he's not soft, for he's reasonable an' likely by natur'. Fwhat is ut? Is ut his breedin' which is nothin', or his edukashin which he niver got? You that think ye know things, answer me that."

But I found no answer. I was wondering how long Ortheris, in the bank of the river, would hold out, and whether I should be forced to help him to desert, as I had given my word.

Just as the dusk shut down and, with a very heavy heart, I was beginning to saddle up my horse, we heard wild shouts from the river.

The devils had departed from Private Stanley Ortheris, No. 22639, B Company. The loneliness, the dusk, and the waiting had driven them out, as I had hoped. We set off at the double and found him plunging about wildly through the grass, with his coat off—my coat off, I mean. He was calling for us like a madman.

When we reached him he was dripping with



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perspiration, and trembling like a startled horse. We had great difficulty in soothing him. He complained that he was in civilian kit, and wanted to tear my clothes off his body. I ordered him to strip, and we made a second exchange as quickly as possible.

The rasp of his own "grayback" shirt and the squeak of his boots seemed to bring him to himself. He put his hands before his eyes and said —

"Wot was it? I ain't mad, I ain't sunstrook, an' I've bin an' gone an' said, an' bin an' gone an' done . . . *Wot 'ave I bin an' done!*"

"Fwhat have you done?" said Mulvaney. "You've dishgraced yourself—though that's no matter. You've dishgraced B Comp'ny, an' worst av all, you've dishgraced *Me!* Me that taught you how for to walk abroad like a man—whin you was a dhirty little, fish-backed little, whimperin' little recruity. As you are now, Stanley Orth'ris!"

Ortheris said nothing for a while. Then he unslung his belt, heavy with the badges of half a dozen regiments that his own had lain with, and handed it over to Mulvaney.

"I'm too little for to mill you, Mulvaney," said he, "an' you've strook me before; but you can take an' cut me in two with this 'ere if you like."

Mulvaney turned to me.

"Lave me to talk to him, Sorr," said Mulvaney.



## MADNESS OF PRIVATE ORTHERIS

I left, and on my way home thought a good deal over Ortheris in particular, and my friend Private Thomas Atkins whom I love, in general.

But I could not come to any conclusion of any kind whatever.

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

Jain 'Ardin' was a Sarjint's wife,  
A Sarjint's wife wus she.  
She married of 'im in Orldershort  
An' comed acrost the sea.  
(*Chorus*) 'Ave you never 'eard tell o' Jain 'Ardin'?  
Jain 'Ardin'?  
Jain 'Ardin'?  
'Ave you never 'eard tell o' Jain 'Ardin'?  
The pride o' the Companee?

*Old Barrack-Room Ballad.*

“A GENTLEMAN who doesn't know the Circasian Circle ought not to stand up for it—puttin' everybody out.” That was what Miss McKenna said, and the Sergeant who was my *vis-à-vis* looked the same thing. I was afraid of Miss McKenna. She was six feet high, all yellow freckles and red hair, and was simply clad in white satin shoes, a pink muslin dress, an apple-green stuff sash, and black silk gloves, with yellow roses in her hair. Wherefore I fled from Miss McKenna and sought my friend Private Mulvaney, who was at the cant—refreshment-table.

“So you've been dancin' with little Jhansi McKenna, Sorr — she that's goin' to marry Corp'ril

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

Slane? Whin you next conversh wid your lorruds an' your ladies, tell thim you've danced wid little Jhansi. 'Tis a thing to be proud av."

But I wasn't proud. I was humble. I saw a story in Private Mulvaney's eye; and besides, if he stayed too long at the bar, he would, I knew, qualify for more pack-drill. Now to meet an esteemed friend doing pack-drill outside the guard-room is embarrassing, especially if you happen to be walking with his Commanding Officer.

"Come on to the parade-ground, Mulvaney, it's cooler there, and tell me about Miss McKenna. What is she, and who is she, and why is she called 'Jhansi'?"

"D'ye mane to say you've niver heard av Ould Pummeloe's daughter? An' you thinkin' you know things! I'm wid ye in a minut' whin me poipec's lit."

We came out under the stars. Mulvaney sat down on one of the artillery bridges, and began in the usual way: his pipe between his teeth, his big hands clasped and dropped between his knees, and his cap well on the back of his head —

"Whin Mrs. Mulvaney that is was Miss Shadd that was, you were a dale younger than you are now, an' the Army was dif'rint in sev'ril e-senshuls. Bhoys have no call for to marry nowadays, an' that's why the Army has so few rale, good, honust, swearin', strapagin', tinder-hearted, heavy-futted

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wives as ut used to have whin I was a Corp'ril. I was rejuiced aftherwards — but no matther — I was a Corp'ril wanst. In thim times a man lived *an'* died wi. his rigimint; an', by natur', he married whin he was a *man*. Whin I was Corp'ril — Mother av Hivin, how the rigimint has died an' been borrun since that day! — my Colour-Sarjint was Ould McKenna, an' a married man tu. An' his woife — his first woife, for he married three times did McKenna — was Bridget McKenna, from Portarlington, like mesilf. I've misremembered fwhat her first name was; but in B Comp'ny we called her 'Ould Pummeloe,' by reason av her figure, which was entirely cir-cum-fe-renshill. Like the big dhrum! Now that woman — God rock her sowl to rest in glory! — was for everlastin' havin' childher; an' McKenna, whin the fifth or sixth come squallin' on to the musther-roll, swore he wud number thim off in future. But Ould Pummeloe she prayed av him to christen them after the names av the stations they was borrun in. So there was Colaba McKenna, an' Muttra McKenna, an' a whole Prisidincy av other McKennas, an' little Jhansi, dancin' over yonder. Whin the childher wasn't bornin', they was dying; for, av our childher die like sheep in these days, they died like flies thin. I lost me own little Shad — but no matther. 'Tis long ago, and Mrs. Mulvaney niver had another.

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

“I’m digresshin. Wan divil’s hot summer, there come an order from some mad ijjit, whose name I misremember, for the rigimint to go up-country. Maybe they wanted to know how the new rail carried throops. They knew! On me sowl, they knew before they was done! Ould Pummeloe had just buried Muttra McKenna; an’, the season bein’ onwholesim, only little Jhansi McKenna, who was four year ould thin, was left on hand.

“Five children gone in fourteen months. ’Twas harrd, wasn’t ut?

“So we wint up to our new Station in that blazin’ heat—may the curse av Saint Lawrence conshume the man who gave the ordher! Will I iver forget that move? They gave us two wake thrains to the rigimint; an’ we was eight hundher’ and sivinty strong. There was A, B, C, an’ D Companies in the secon’ thrain, wid twelve women, no orficers’ ladies, an’ thirteen childher. We was to go six hundher’ miles, an’ railways was new in thim days. Whin we had been a night in the belly av the thrain—the men ragin’ in their shirts an’ dhrinkin’ anything they cud find, an’ eatin’ bad fruit-stuff whin they cud, for we cudn’t stop ’em—I was a Corp’ril thin—the cholera bruk out wid the dawnin’ av the day.

“Pray to the Saints you may niver see cholera in a throop-thrain! ’Tis like the judgmint av

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God hittin' down from the nakid sky! We run into a rest-camp — as ut might have been Ludianny, but not by any means so comfortable. The Orficer Commandin' sent a telegrapt up the line, three hundher' mile up, askin' for help. Faith, we wanted ut, for ivry sowl av the followers ran for the dear life as soon as the thrain stopped; an' by the time that telegrapt was writ there wasn't a naygur in the Station exceptin' the telegrapt-clerk — an' he only bekaze he was held down to his chair by the scruff av his sneakin' black neck. Thin the day began wid the noise in the carr'ges, an' the rattle av the men on the platform fallin' over, arms an' all, as they stud for to answer the Comp'ny musther-roll before goin' over to the camp. 'Tisn't for me to say what like the cholera was like. Maybe the Doctor cud ha' tould, av he hadn't dropped on to the platform from the door av a carriage where we was takin' out the dead. He died wid the rest. Some bhoys had died in the night. We tuk out sivin, and twinty more was sickenin' as we tuk thim. The women was huddled up anyways, screamin' wid fear.

“Sez the Commandin' Orficer, whose name I misremember, ‘Take the women over to that tope av trees yonder. Get thim out av the camp. 'Tis no place for thim.’

“Ould Pummeloe was sittin' on her beddin'-rowl, thryin' to kape little Jhansi quiet. ‘Go off

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

to that tope!’ sez the Orficer. ‘Go out av the men’s way!’

“‘Be damned av I do!’ sez Ould Pummeloe, an’ little Jhansi, squattin’ by her mother’s side, squeaks out, ‘Be damned av I do,’ tu. Thin Ould Pummeloe turns to the women an’ she sez, ‘Are ye goin’ to let the bhoys die while you’re picnick-in’, ye sluts?’ sez she. ‘’Tis wather they want. Come on an’ help.’

“Wid that, she turns up her sleeves an’ steps out for a well behind the rest-camp — little Jhansi trottin’ behind wid a *lotab* an’ string, an’ the other women followin’ like lambs, wid horse-buckets and cookin’-pots. Whin all the things was full, Ould Pummeloe marches back into camp — ’twas like a battle-field wid all the glory missin’ — at the hid av the rigimint av women.

“‘McKenna, me man!’ she sez, wid a voice on her like grand-roun’s challenge, ‘tell the bhoys to be quiet. Ould Pummeloe’s comin’ to look afther thim — wid free dhrinks.’

“Thin we cheered, an’ the cheerin’ in the lines was louder than the noise av the poor divils wid the sickness on thim. But not much.

“You see, we was a new an’ raw rigimint in those days, an’ we cud make neither head nor tail av the sickness; an’ so we was useless. The men was goin’ roun’ an’ about like dumb sheep, waitin’ for the nex’ man to fall over, an’ sayin’ undher



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their spache, ‘Fwhat is ut? In the name of God, *fwhat* is ut?’ ’Twas horrible. But through ut all, up an’ down, an’ down an’ up, wint Ould Pummeloe an’ little Jhansi—all we cud see av the baby, undher a dead man’s helmut wid the chin-strap swingin’ about her little stummick—up an’ down wid the wather an’ fwhat brandy there was.

“Now an’ thin Ould Pummeloe, the tears runnin’ down her fat, red face, sez, ‘Me bhoys, me poor, dead, darlin’ bhoys!’ But, for the most, she was thryin’ to put heart into the men an’ kape thim stiddy; and little Jhansi was tellin’ thim all they wud be ‘betther’ in the mornin’.’ ’Twas a thrick she’d picked up from hearin’ Ould Pummeloe whin Muttra was burnin’ out wid fever. In the mornin’! ’Twas the iverlastin’ mornin’ at St. Pether’s Gate was the mornin’ for sivin-an’-twenty good men; and twenty more was sick to the death in that bitter, burnin’ sun. But the women worked like angils, as I’ve said, an’ the men like divils, till two doctors come down from above, and we was rescued.

“But just before that, Ould Pummeloe, on her knees over a bhoy in my squad—right-cot man to me he was in the barrick—tellin’ him the wur-rud av the Church that niver failed a man yet, sez, ‘Hould me up, bhoys! I’m feelin’ bloody sick!’ ’Twas the sun, not the cholera, did ut. She mis-

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remembered she was only wearin' her ould black bonnet, an' she died wid 'McKenna, me man,' houldin' her up, an' the bhoys howled whin they buried her.

"That night a big wind blew, an' blew, an' blew, an' blew the tents flat. But it blew the cholera away, an' niver another case there was all the while we was waitin' — ten days in quarantin'. Av you will belave me, the thrack av the sickness in the camp was for all the wurruld the thrack av a man walkin' four times in a figur'-av-eight through the tents. They say 'tis the Wandherin' Jew takes the cholera wid him. I believe ut.

"An' *that*," said Mulvaney illogically, "is the cause why little Jhansi McKenna is fwat she is. She was brought up by the Quartermaster-Sergeant's wife whin McKenna died, but she b'longs to B Comp'ny; and this tale I'm tellin' you—*wid* a proper appreciashin av Jhansi McKenna—I've belted into ivry recruity av the Comp'ny as he was drafted. 'Faith, 'twas me belted Corp'ril Slane into askin' the girl!"

"Not really?"

"Man, I did! She's no beauty to look at, but she's Ould Pummeloe's daughter, an' 'tis my juty to provide for her. Just before Slane got his promotion I sez to him, 'Slane,' sez I, 'to-morrow 'twill be insubordinashin av me to chastise you; but, by the sowl av Ould Pummeloe, who is now

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in glory, av you don't give me your wurrud to ask Jhansi McKenna at wanst, I'll peel the flesh off yer bones wid a brass huk to-night. 'Tis a dish-grace to B Comp'ny she's been single so long!' sez I. Was I goin' to let a three-year-ould pre-shume to discoorse wid me — my will bein' set? No! Slane wint an' asked her. He's a good bhoy is Slane. Wan av these days he'll get into the Com'ssariat an' dhrive a buggy wid his — savin's. So I provided for Ould Pummeloe's daughter; an' now you go along an' dance agin wid her."

And I did.

I felt a respect for Miss Jhansi McKenna; and I went to her wedding later on.

Perhaps I will tell you about that one of these days.

## THE INCARNATION OF KRISHNA MULVANEY

Wohl auf, my bully cavaliers,  
We ride to church to-day,  
The man that hasn't got a horse  
Must steal one straight away. .

. . . . .  
Be reverent, men, remember  
This is a Gottes haus.  
Du, Conrad, cut along der aisle  
And schenck der whiskey aus.

*Hans Breitmann's Ride to Church.*

ONCE upon a time, very far from England, there lived three men who loved each other so greatly that neither man nor woman could come between them. They were in no sense refined, nor to be admitted to the outer-door mats of decent folk, because they happened to be private soldiers in Her Majesty's Army; and private soldiers of our service have small time for self-culture. Their duty is to keep themselves and their accoutrements specklessly clean, to refrain from getting drunk more often than is necessary, to obey their superiors, and to pray for a war. All these things my friends accomplished; and of their own motion

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threw in some fighting-work for which the Army Regulations did not call. Their fate sent them to serve in India, which is not a golden country, though poets have sung otherwise. There men die with great swiftness, and those who live suffer many and curious things. I do not think that my friends concerned themselves much with the social or political aspects of the East. They attended a not unimportant war on the northern frontier, another one on our western boundary, and a third in Upper Burma. Then their regiment sat still to recruit, and the boundless monotony of cantonment life was their portion. They were drilled morning and evening on the same dusty parade-ground. They wandered up and down the same stretch of dusty white road, attended the same church and the same grog-shop, and slept in the same lime-washed barn of a barrack for two long years. There was Mulvaney, the father in the craft, who had served with various regiments from Bermuda to Halifax, old in war, scarred, reckless, resourceful, and in his pious hours an unequalled soldier. To him turned for help and comfort six and a half feet of slow-moving, heavy-footed Yorkshireman, born on the wolds, bred in the dales, and educated chiefly among the carriers' carts at the back of York railway-station. His name was Learoyd, and his chief virtue an unmitigated patience which helped him to win fights. How

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Ortheris, a fox-terrier of a Cockney, ever came to be one of the trio, is a mystery which even to-day I cannot explain. "There was always three av us," Mulvaney used to say. "An' by the grace av God, so long as our service lasts, three av us they'll always be. 'Tis bettther so."

They desired no companionship beyond their own, and it was evil for any man of the regiment who attempted dispute with them. Physical argument was out of the question as regarded Mulvaney and the Yorkshireman; and assault on Ortheris meant a combined attack from these twain—a business which no five men were anxious to have on their hands. Therefore they flourished, sharing their drinks, their tobacco, and their money; good luck and evil; battle and the chances of death; life and the chances of happiness from Calicut in southern, to Peshawur in northern India.

Through no merit of my own it was my good fortune to be in a measure admitted to their friendship—frankly by Mulvaney from the beginning, sullenly and with reluctance by Learoyd, and suspiciously by Ortheris, who held to it that no man not in the Army could fraternise with a red-coat. "Like to like," said he. "I'm a bloomin' sodger—he's a bloomin' civilian. 'Tain't natural—that's all."

But that was not all. They thawed progres-

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sively, and in the thawing told me more of their lives and adventures than I am ever likely to write.

Omitting all else, this tale begins with the Lam-entable Thirst that was at the beginning of First Causes. Never was such a thirst — Mulvaney told me so. They kicked against their compulsory virtue, but the attempt was only successful in the case of Ortheris. He, whose talents were many, went forth into the highways and stole a dog from a “civilian” — *videlicet*, some one, he knew not who, not in the Army. Now that civilian was but newly connected by marriage with the Colonel of the regiment, and outcry was made from quarters least anticipated by Ortheris, and in the end he was forced, lest a worse thing should happen, to dispose at ridiculously unremunerative rates of as promising a small terrier as ever graced one end of a leading-string. The purchase-money was barely sufficient for one small outbreak which led him to the guard-room. He escaped, however, with nothing worse than a severe reprimand and a few hours of punishment drill. Not for nothing had he acquired the reputation of being “the best soldier of his inches” in the regiment. Mulvaney had taught personal cleanliness and efficiency as the first articles of his companions’ creed. “A dhirty man,” he was used to say, in the speech of his kind, “goes to Clink for a weakness in the knees, an’ is coort-martialled for a pair av



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socks missin'; but a clane man, such as is an ornament to his service — a man whose buttons are gold, whose coat is wax upon him, an' whose 'coutrements are widout a speck — *that* man may, spakin' in reason, do fwhat he likes an' dhrink from day to divil. That's the pride av bein' dacint."

We sat together, upon a day, in the shade of a ravine far from the barracks, where a watercourse used to run in rainy weather. Behind us was the scrub jungle, in which jackals, peacocks, the gray wolves of the North-Western Provinces, and occasionally a tiger estrayed from Central India, were supposed to dwell. In front lay the cantonment, glaring white under a glaring sun; and on either side ran the broad road that led to Delhi.

It was the scrub that suggested to my mind the wisdom of Mulvaney taking a day's leave and going upon a shooting-tour. The peacock is a holy bird throughout India, and he who slays one is in danger of being mobbed by the nearest villagers; but on the last occasion that Mulvaney had gone forth, he had contrived, without in the least offending local religious susceptibilities, to return with six beautiful peacock skins which he sold to profit. It seemed just possible then —

"But fwhat manner av use is ut to me goin' out widout a dhrink? The ground's powdher-dhry underfoot, an' ut gets unto the throat fit to kill," wailed Mulvaney, looking at me reproachfully.

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‘An’ a peacock is not a bird you can catch the tail av onless ye run. Can a man run on wather — and jungle-wather too?’

Ortheris had considered the question in all its bearings. He spoke, chewing his pipe-stem meditatively the while :

“Go forth, return in glory,  
To Clusium’s royal ’ome :  
An’ round these bloomin’ temples ’ang  
The bloomin’ shields o’ Rome.

You better go. You ain’t like to shoot yourself — not while there’s a chanst of liquor. Me an’ Learoyd ’ll stay at ’ome an’ keep shop — ’case o’ anythin’ turnin’ up. But you go out with a gas-pipe gun an’ ketch the little peacockses or somethin’. You kin get one day’s leave easy as wink-in’. Go along an’ get it, an’ get peacockses or somethin’.”

“Jock,” said Mulvaney, turning to Learoyd, who was half asleep under the shadow of the bank. He roused slowly.

“Sitha, Mulvaaney, go,” said he.

And Mulvaney went; cursing his allies with Irish fluency and barrack-room point.

“Take note,” he said, when he had won his holiday, and appeared dressed in his roughest clothes, with the only other regimental fowling-piece in his hand. “Take note, Jock, an’ you,

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Orth'ris, I am goin' in the face av my own will—all for to please you. I misdoubt anythin' will come av permiscuous huntin' afther peacockses in a desolit lan'; an' I know that I will lie down an' die wid thirrst. Me catch peacockses for you, ye lazy scutts—an' be sacrificed by the peasanthry—Ugh!”

He waved a huge paw and went away.

At twilight, long before the appointed hour, he returned empty-handed, much begrimed with dirt.

“Peacockses?” queried Ortheris from the safe rest of a barrack-room table whereon he was smoking cross-legged, Learoyd fast asleep on a bench.

“Jock,” said Mulvaney, without answering, as he stirred up the sleeper. “Jock, can ye fight? Will ye fight?”

Very slowly the meaning of the words communicated itself to the half-roused man. He understood—and again—what might these things mean? Mulvaney was shaking him savagely. Meantime the men in the room howled with delight. There was war in the confederacy at last—war and the breaking of bonds.

Barrack-room etiquette is stringent. On the direct challenge must follow the direct reply. This is more binding than the ties of tried friendship. Once again Mulvaney repeated the question. Learoyd answered by the only means in his power, and so swiftly that the Irishman had barely time

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to avoid the blow. The laughter around increased. Learoyd looked bewilderedly at his friend — himself as greatly bewildered. Ortheris dropped from the table because his world was falling.

“Come outside,” said Mulvaney, and as the occupants of the barrack-room prepared joyously to follow, he turned and said furiously, “There will be no fight this night — onless any wan av you is wishful to assist. The man that does, follows on.”

No man moved. The three passed out into the moonlight, Learoyd fumbling with the buttons of his coat. The parade-ground was deserted except for the scurrying jackals. Mulvaney’s impetuous rush carried his companions far into the open ere Learoyd attempted to turn round and continue the discussion.

“Be still now. ’Twas my fault for beginnin’ things in the middle av an end, Jock. I should ha’ comminst wid an explanation; but Jock, dear, on your sowl are ye fit, think you, for the finest fight that iver was — betther than fightin’ me? Considher before ye answer.”

More than ever puzzled, Learoyd turned round two or three times, felt an arm, kicked tentatively, and answered, “Ah’m fit.” He was accustomed to fight blindly at the bidding of the superior mind.

They sat them down, the men looking on from

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afar, and Mulvaney untangled himself in mighty words.

“Followin’ your fools’ scheme, I wint out into the thrackless desert beyond the barricks. An’ there I met a pious Hindu dhriving a bullock-kyart. I tuk ut for granted he wud be delighted for to convoy me a piece, an’ I jumped in ——”

“You long, lazy, black-haired swine,” drawled Ortheris, who would have done the same thing under similar circumstances.

“’Twas the height av policy. That naygur-man dhruv miles an’ miles — as far as the new railway line they’re buildin’ now back av the Tavi river. ‘’Tis a kyart for dhirt only,’ says he now an’ again timoreously, to get me out av ut. ‘Dhirt I am,’ sez I, ‘an’ the dhryest that you iver kyarted. Dhrove on, me son, an’ glory be wid you.’ At that I wint to slape, an’ took no heed till he pulled up on the embankmint av the line where the coolies were pilin’ mud. There was a matther av two thousand coolies on that line — you remimber that. Prisintly a bell rang, an’ they throops off to a big pay-shed. ‘Where’s the white man in charge?’ sez I to my kyart-dhriver. ‘In the shed,’ sez he, ‘engaged on a riffle.’—‘A fwhat?’ sez I. ‘Riffle,’ sez he. ‘You take ticket. He take money. You get nothin’.’—‘Oho!’ sez I, ‘that’s fwhat the shupe-rrior an’ cultivated man calls a raffle, me misbe-

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guided child av darkness an' sin. Lead on to that raffle, though fwhat the mischief 'tis doin' so far away from uts home—which is the charity-bazaar at Christmas, an' the colonel's wife grinnin' behind the tea-table—is more than I know.' Wid that I wint to the shed an' found 'twas pay-day among the coolies. Their wages was on a table forninst a big, fine, red buck av a man—sivun fut high, four fut wide, an' three fut thick, wid a fist on him like a corn-sack. He was payin' the coolies fair an' easy, but he wud ask each man if he wud raffle that month, an' each man sez, 'Yes,' av coorse. Thin he wud deduct from their wages accordin'. Whin all was paid, he filled an ould cigar-box full av gun-wads an' scattedher ut among the coolies. They did not take much joy av that performince, an' small wondher. A man close to me picks up a black gun-wad an' sings out, 'I have ut.'—'Good may ut do you,' sez I. The coolie wint forward to this big, fine, red man, who threw a cloth off av the most sumpshus, jooled, enamelled an' variously bedivilled sedan-chair I iver saw."

"Sedan-chair! Put your 'ead in a bag. That was a palanquin. Don't yer know a palanquin when you see it?" said Ortheris with great scorn.

"I chuse to call ut sedan-chair, an' chair ut shall be, little man," continued the Irishman. "'Twas a most amazin' chair—all lined wid pink silk an'



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fitted wid red silk curtains. ‘Here ut is,’ sez the red man. ‘Here ut is,’ sez the coolie, an’ he grinned weakly-ways. ‘Is ut any use to you?’ sez the red man. ‘No,’ sez the coolie; ‘I’d like to make a presint av ut to you.’—‘I am graciously pleased to accept that same,’ sez the red man; an’ at that all the coolies cried aloud in fwhat was mint for cheerful notes, an’ wint back to their diggin’, lavin’ me alone in the shed. The red man saw me, an’ his face grew blue on his big, fat neck. ‘Fwhat d’you want here?’ sez he. ‘Stand-in’-room an’ no more,’ sez I, ‘unless it may be fwhat ye niver had, an’ that’s manners, ye rafflin’ ruffian,’ for I was not goin’ to have the Service throd upon. ‘Out of this,’ sez he. ‘I’m in charge av this section av construction.’—‘I’m in charge av mesilf,’ sez I, ‘an’ it’s like I will stay a while. D’ye raffle much in these parts?’—‘Fwhat’s that to you?’ sez he. ‘Nothin’,’ sez I, ‘but a great dale to you, for begad I’m thinkin’ you get the full half av your revenue from that sedan-chair. Is ut always raffled so?’ I sez, an’ wid that I wint to a coolie to ask questions. Bhoys, that man’s name is Dearsley, an’ he’s been rafflin’ that ould sedan-chair monthly this matther av nine months. Ivry coolie on the section takes a ticket — or he gives ’em the go — wanst a month on pay-day. Ivry coolie that wins ut gives ut back to him, for ’tis too big to carry away, an’ he’d sack the man



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that thried to sell ut. That Dearsley has been makin' the rowlin' wealth av Roshus by nefarious rafflin'. Think av the burnin' shame to the sufferin' coolie-man that the army in Injia are bound to protect an' nourish in their bosoms! Two thousand coolies defrauded wanst a month!"

"Dom t' coolies. Hast gotten t' cheer, mon?" said Learoyd.

"Hould on. Havin' onearded this amazin' an' stupenjuss fraud committed by the man Dearsley, I hild a council av war; he thryin' all the time to sejuce me into a fight wid opprobrious language. That sedan-chair niver belonged by right to any foreman av coolies. 'Tis a king's chair, or a quane's. There's gold on ut an' silk an' all manner av trapesemints. Bhoys, 'tis not for me to countenance any sort av wrong-doin' — me bein' the ould man — but — anyway he has had ut nine months, an' he dare not make throuble av ut was taken from him. Five miles away, or ut may be six —"

There was a long pause, and the jackals howled merrily. Learoyd bared one arm, and contemplated it in the moonlight. Then he nodded partly to himself and partly to his friends. Ortheris wriggled with suppressed emotion.

"I thought ye wud see the reasonableness av ut," said Mulvaney. "I made bould to say as much to the man before. He was for a direct

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front attack — fut, horse, an' guns — an' all for nothin', seein' that I had no thransport to convey the machine away. 'I will not argue wid you,' sez I, 'this day, but subsequintly, Mister Dearsley, me rafflin' jool, we talk ut out lengthways. 'Tis no good policy to swindle the naygur av his hard-earned emolumints, an' by presint informashin'— 'twas the kyart-man that tould me — 'ye've been perpethrating that same for nine months. But I'm a just man,' sez I, 'an' overlookin' the pre-sumpshin that yondher settee wid the gilt top was not come by honust' — at that he turned sky-green, so I knew things was more thrue than tellable — 'not come by honust, I'm willin' to compound the felony for this month's winnin's.'"

"Ah! Ho!" from Learoyd and Ortheris.

"That man Dearsley's rushin' on his fate," continued Mulvaney, solemnly wagging his head. "All Hell had no name bad enough for me that tide. Faith, he called me a robber! Me! that was savin' him from continuin' in his evil ways widout a remonstrance — an' to a man av conscience a remonstrance may change the chune av his life. ' 'Tis not for me to argue,' sez I, 'fwhatever ye are, Mister Dearsley; but, by my hand, I'll take away the temptation for you that lies in that sedan-chair.' — 'You will have to fight me for ut,' sez he, 'for well I know you will never dare make report to any one.' — 'Fight I will,' sez I, 'but not

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this day, for I'm rejuiced for want av nourishment. — 'Ye're an ould bould hand,' sez he, sizin' me up an' down; 'an' a jool av a fight we will have. Eat now an' dhrink, an' go your way.' Wid that he gave me some hump an' whisky — good whisky — an' we talked av this an' that the while. 'It goes hard on me now,' sez I, wipin' my mouth, 'to confiscate that piece av furniture, but justice is justice.' — 'Ye've not got ut yet,' sez he; 'there's the fight between.' — 'There is,' sez I, 'an' a good fight. Ye shall have the pick av the best quality in my rigimint for the dinner you have given this day.' Thin I came hot-fut to you two. Hould your tongue, the both. 'Tis this way. To-morrow we three will go there, an' he shall have his pick betune me an' Jock. Jock's a deceivin' fighter, for he is all fat to the eye, an' he moves slow. Now I'm all beef to the look, an' I move quick. By my reckonin' the Dearsley man won't take me; so me an' Orth'ris 'll see fair play. Jock, I tell you, 'twill be big fightin' — whipped, wid the cream above the jam. Afther the business 'twill take a good three av us — Jock 'll be very hurt — to haul away that sedan-chair."

"Palanquin." This from Ortheris.

"Fwhatever ut is, we must have ut. 'Tis the only sellin' piece av property widin reach that we can get so cheap. An' fwhat's a fight afther all? He has robbed the naygur-man, dishonust. We

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rob him honest for the sake av the whisky he gave me."

"But wot'll we do with the bloomin' article when we've got it? Them palanquins are as big as 'ouses, an' uncommon 'ard to sell, as McCleary said when ye stole the sentry-box from the Curragh."

"Who's goin' to do t' fightin'?" said Learoyd, and Ortheris subsided. The three returned to barracks without a word. Mulvaney's last argument clinched the matter. This palanquin was property, vendible, and to be attained in the simplest and least embarrassing fashion. It would eventually become beer. Great was Mulvaney.

Next afternoon a procession of three formed itself and disappeared into the scrub in the direction of the new railway line. Learoyd alone was without care, for Mulvaney dived darkly into the future, and little Ortheris feared the unknown. What befell at that interview in the lonely payshed by the side of the half-built embankment, only a few hundred coolies know, and their tale is a confusing one, running thus —

"We were at work. Three men in red coats came. They saw the Sahib — Dearsley Sahib. They made oration; and noticeably the small man among the red-coats. Dearsley Sahib also made oration, and used many very strong words. Upon this talk they departed together to an open space,

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and there the fat man in the red coat fought with Dearsley Sahib after the custom of white men—with his hands, making no noise, and never at all pulling Dearsley Sahib's hair. Such of us as were not afraid beheld these things for just so long a time as a man needs to cook the mid-day meal. The small man in the red coat had possessed himself of Dearsley Sahib's watch. No, he did not steal that watch. He held it in his hand, and at certain seasons made outcry, and the twain ceased their combat, which was like the combat of young bulls in spring. Both men were soon all red, but Dearsley Sahib was much more red than the other. Seeing this, and fearing for his life—because we greatly loved him—some fifty of us made shift to rush upon the red-coats. But a certain man—very black as to the hair, and in no way to be confused with the small man, or the fat man who fought—that man, we affirm, ran upon us, and of us he embraced some ten or fifty in both arms, and beat our heads together, so that our livers turned to water, and we ran away. It is not good to interfere in the fightings of white men. After that Dearsley Sahib fell and did not rise, these men jumped upon his stomach and despoiled him of all his money, and attempted to fire the payshed, and departed. Is it true that Dearsley Sahib makes no complaint of these latter things having been done? We were senseless with fear, and do

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not at all remember. There was no palanquin near the pay-shed. What do we know about palanquins? Is it true that Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place, on account of his sickness, for ten days? This is the fault of those bad men in the red coats, who should be severely punished; for Dearsley Sahib is both our father and mother, and we love him much. Yet, if Dearsley Sahib does not return to this place at all, we will speak the truth. There was a palanquin, for the up-keep of which we were forced to pay nine-tenths of our monthly wage. On such mulctings Dearsley Sahib allowed us to make obeisance to him before the palanquin. What could we do? We were poor men. He took a full half of our wages. Will the Government repay us those moneys? Those three men in red coats bore the palanquin upon their shoulders and departed. All the money that Dearsley Sahib had taken from us was in the cushions of that palanquin. Therefore they stole it. Thousands of rupees were there—all our money. It was our bank-box, to fill which we cheerfully contributed to Dearsley Sahib three-sevenths of our monthly wage. Why does the white man look upon us with the eye of disfavour? Before God, there was a palanquin, and now there is no palanquin; and if they send the police here to make inquisition, we can only say that there never has been any palanquin. Why should a



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palanquin be near these works? We are poor men, and we know nothing."

Such is the simplest version of the simplest story connected with the descent upon Dearsley. From the lips of the coolies I received it. Dearsley himself was in no condition to say anything, and Mulvaney preserved a massive silence, broken only by the occasional licking of the lips. He had seen a fight so gorgeous that even his power of speech was taken from him. I respected that reserve until, three days after the affair, I discovered in a disused stable in my quarters a palanquin of unchastened splendour — evidently in past days the litter of a queen. The pole whereby it swung between the shoulders of the bearers was rich with the painted *papier-maché* of Cashmere. The shoulder-pads were of yellow silk. The panels of the litter itself were ablaze with the loves of all the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon — lacquer on cedar. The cedar sliding doors were fitted with hasps of translucent Jaipur enamel and ran in grooves shod with silver. The cushions were of brocaded Delhi silk, and the curtains which once hid any glimpse of the beauty of the king's palace were stiff with gold. Closer investigation showed that the entire fabric was everywhere rubbed and discoloured by time and wear; but even thus it was sufficiently gorgeous to deserve housing on the threshold of a royal zenana. I found no fault



with it, except that it was in my stable. Then, trying to lift it by the silver-shod shoulder-pole, I laughed. The road from Dearsley's pay-shed to the cantonment was a narrow and uneven one, and traversed by three very inexperienced palanquin-bearers, one of whom was sorely battered about the head, must have been a path of torment. Still I did not quite recognise the right of the three musketeers to turn me into a "fence" for stolen property.

"I'm askin' you to warehouse ut," said Mulvaney when he was brought to consider the question. "There's no steal in ut. Dearsley tould us we cud have ut if we fought. Jack fought—an', oh, Sorr, when the throuble was at uts finest an' Jock was bleedin' like a stuck pig, an' little Orth'ris was shquealin' on one leg chewin' big bites out av Dearsley's watch, I wud ha' given my place at the fight to have had you see wan round. He tuk Jock, as I suspicioned he would, an' Jock was deceptive. Nine roun's they were even matched, an' at the tenth —— About that palanquin now. There's not the least throuble in the world, or we wud not ha' brought ut here. You will ondhersand that the Queen — God bless her! — does not reckon for a privit soldier to kape elephints an' palanquins an' sich in barricks. Afther we had dhragged ut down from Dearsley's through that cruel scrub that near broke Orth'ris's heart, we set

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ut in the ravine for a night; an' a thief av a porcupine an' a civet-cat av a jackal roosted in ut, as well we knew in the mornin'. I put ut to you, Sorr, is an elegint palanquin, fit for the princess, the natural abidin'-place av all the vermin in cantonmints? We brought ut to you, afther dark, and put ut in your shtable. Do not let your conscience prick. Think av the rejoicin' men in the pay-shed yonder—lookin' at Dearsley wid his head tied up in a towel—an' well knowin' that they can dhraw their pay ivry month widout stoppages for riffles. Indirectly, Sorr, you have rescued from an onprincipled son av a night-hawk the peasantry av a numerous village. An' besides, will I let that sedan-chair rot on our hands? Not I. 'Tis not ivry day a piece av pure joolry comes into the market. There's not a king widin these forty miles"—he waved his hand round the dusty horizon—"not a king wud not be glad to buy ut. Some day mesilf, whin I have leisure, I'll take ut up along the road an' dish-pose av ut."

"How?" said I, for I knew the man was capable of anything.

"Get into ut, av coorse, and keep wan eye open through the curtains. Whin I see a likely man av the native persuasion, I will descind blushin' from my canopy and say, 'Buy a palanquin, ye black scutt?' I will have to hire four men to carry

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me first, though; and that's impossible till next pay-day."

Curiously enough, Learoyd, who had fought for the prize, and in the winning secured the highest pleasure life had to offer him, was altogether disposed to undervalue it, while Ortheris openly said it would be better to break the thing up. Dearsley, he argued, might be a many-sided man, capable, despite his magnificent fighting qualities, of setting in motion the machinery of the civil law—a thing much abhorred by the soldier. Under any circumstances their fun had come and passed; the next pay-day was close at hand, when there would be beer for all. Wherefore longer conserve the painted palanquin?

"A first-class rifle-shot an' a good little man av your inches you are," said Mulvaney. "But you niver had a head worth a soft-boiled egg. 'Tis me has to lie awake av nights schamin' an' plottin' for the three av us. Orth'ris, me son, 'tis no matther av a few gallons av beer—no, nor twenty gallons—but tubs an' vats an' firkins in that sedan-chair. Who ut was, an' what ut was, an' how ut got there, we do not know; but I know in my bones that you an' me an' Jock wid his sprained thumb will get a fortune thereby. Lave me alone, an' let me think."

Meantime the palanquin stayed in my stall, the key of which was in Mulvaney's hands.

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Pay-day came, and with it beer. It was not in experience to hope that Mulvaney, dried by four weeks' drought, would avoid excess. Next morning he and the palanquin had disappeared. He had taken the precaution of getting three days' leave "to see a friend on the railway," and the colonel, well knowing that the seasonal outburst was near, and hoping it would spend its force beyond the limits of his jurisdiction, cheerfully gave him all he demanded. At this point Mulvaney's history, as recorded in the mess-room, stopped.

Ortheris carried it not much further. "No, 'e wasn't drunk," said the little man loyally; "the liquor was no more than feelin' its way round inside of 'im; but 'e went an' filled that 'ole bloomin' palanquin with bottles 'fore 'e went off. 'E's gone an' 'ired six men to carry 'im, an' I 'ad to 'elp 'im into 'is nupshal couch, 'cause 'e wouldn't 'ear reason. 'E's gone off in 'is shirt an' trousies, swearin' tremenjús—gone down the road in the palanquin, wavin' 'is legs out o' windy."

"Yes," said I, "but where?"

"Now you arx me a question. 'E said 'e was goin' to sell that palanquin, but from observations what happened when I was stuffin' 'im through the door, I fancy 'e's gone to the new embankment to mock at Dearsley. 'Soon as Jock's off duty I'm goin' there to see if 'e's safe—not Mulvaney, but t'other man. My saints, but I pity 'im

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as 'elps Terence out o' the palanquin when 'e's once fair drunk!"

"He'll come back without harm," I said.

"'Corse 'e will. On'y question is, what'll 'e be doin' on the road? Killing Dearsley, like as not. 'E shouldn't 'a' gone without Jock or me."

Reinforced by Learoyd, Ortheris sought the foreman of the coolie-gang. Dearsley's head was still embellished with towels. Mulvaney, drunk or sober, would have struck no man in that condition, and Dearsley indignantly denied that he would have taken advantage of the intoxicated brave.

"I had my pick o' you two," he explained to Learoyd, "and you got my palanquin—not before I'd made my profit on it. Why'd I do harm when everything's settled? Your man *did* come here—drunk as Davy's sow on a frosty night—came a-purpose to mock me—stuck his head out of the door an' called me a crucified hodman. I made him drunker, an' sent him along. But I never touched him."

To these things Learoyd, slow to perceive the evidences of sincerity, answered only, "If owt comes to Mulvaaney 'long o' you, I'll gripple you, clouts or no clouts on your ugly head, an' I'll draw t' throat twistyways, mon. See there now."

The embassy removed itself, and Dearsley, the

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battered, laughed alone over his supper that evening.

Three days passed — a fourth and a fifth. The week drew to a close, and Mulvaney did not return. He, his royal palanquin, and his six attendants, had vanished into air. A very large and a very tipsy soldier, his feet sticking out of the litter of a reigning princess, is not a thing to travel along the ways without comment. Yet no man of all the country round had seen any such wonder. He was, and he was not; and Learoyd suggested the immediate smashment of Dearsley as a sacrifice to his ghost. Ortheris insisted that all was well, and in the light of past experience his hopes seemed reasonable.

“When Mulvaney goes up the road,” said he, “’e’s like to go a very long ways up, specially when ’e’s so blue drunk as ’e is now. But what gets me is ’is not bein’ ’eard of pullin’ wool off the niggers somewheres about. That don’t look good. The drink must ha’ died out in ’im by this, unless ’e’s broke a bank, an’ then — Why don’t ’e come back? ’E didn’t ought to ha’ gone off without us.”

Even Ortheris’s heart sank at the end of the seventh day, for half the regiment were out scouring the country-side, and Learoyd had been forced to fight two men who hinted openly that Mulvaney had deserted. To do him justice, the colo

nel laughed at the notion, even when it was put forward by his much-trusted adjutant.

“Mulvaney would as soon think of deserting as you would,” said he. “No; he’s either fallen into a mischief among the villagers — and yet that isn’t likely, for he’d blarney himself out of the Pit; or else he is engaged on urgent private affairs — some stupendous devilment that we shall hear of at mess after it has been the round of the barrack-rooms. The worst of it is that I shall have to give him twenty-eight days’ confinement at least for being absent without leave, just when I most want him to lick the new batch of recruits into shape. I never knew a man who could put a polish on young soldiers as quickly as Mulvaney can. How does he do it?”

“With blarney and the buckle-end of a belt, sir,” said the adjutant. “He is worth a couple of non-commissioned officers when we are dealing with an Irish draft, and the London lads seem to adore him. The worst of it is that if he goes to the cells the other two are neither to hold nor to bind till he comes out again. I believe Ortheris preaches mutiny on those occasions, and I know that the mere presence of Learoyd mourning for Mulvaney kills all the cheerfulness of his room. The sergeants tell me that he allows no man to laugh when he feels unhappy. They are a queer gang.”



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“For all that, I wish we had a few more of them. I like a well-conducted regiment, but these pasty-faced, shifty-eyed, mealy-mouthed young slouchers from the depot worry me sometimes with their offensive virtue. They don’t seem to have backbone enough to do anything but play cards and prowling round the married quarters. I believe I’d forgive that old villain on the spot if he turned up with any sort of explanation that I could in decency accept.”

“Not likely to be much difficulty about that, sir,” said the adjutant. “Mulvaney’s explanations are only one degree less wonderful than his performances. They say that when he was in the Black Tyrone, before he came to us, he was discovered on the banks of the Liffey trying to sell his colonel’s charger to a Donegal dealer as a perfect lady’s hack. Shackbolt commanded the Tyrone then.”

“Shackbolt must have had apoplexy at the thought of his ramping war-horses answering to that description. He used to buy unbacked devils, and tame them on some pet theory of starvation. What did Mulvaney say?”

“That he was a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, anxious to ‘sell the poor baste where he would get something to fill out his dimples.’ Shackbolt laughed, but I fancy that was why Mulvaney exchanged to ours.”

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“I wish he were back,” said the colonel; “for I like him and believe he likes me.”

That evening, to cheer our souls, Learoyd, Ortheris, and I went into the waste to smoke out a porcupine. All the dogs attended, but even their clamour—and they began to discuss the shortcomings of porcupines before they left cantonments—could not take us out of ourselves. A large, low moon turned the tops of the plume-grass to silver, and the stunted camelthorn bushes and sour tamarisks into the likenesses of trooping devils. The smell of the sun had not left the earth, and little aimless winds blowing across the rose-gardens to the southward brought the scent of dried roses and water. Our fire once started, and the dogs craftily disposed to wait the dash of the porcupine, we climbed to the top of a rain-scarred hillock of earth, and looked across the scrub seamed with cattle-paths, white with the long grass, and dotted with spots of level pond-bottom, where the snipe would gather in winter.

“This,” said Ortheris, with a sigh, as he took in the unkempt desolation of it all, “this is sanguinary. This is unusually sanguinary. Sort o’ mad country. Like a grate when the fire’s put out by the sun.” He shaded his eyes against the moonlight. “An’ there’s a loony dancin’ in the middle of it all. Quite right. I’d dance too if I wasn’t so downheart.”

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There pranced a Portent in the face of the moon — a huge and ragged spirit of the waste, that flapped its wings from afar. It had risen out of the earth; it was coming towards us, and its outline was never twice the same. The toga, table-cloth, or dressing-gown, whatever the creature wore, took a hundred shapes. Once it stopped on a neighbouring mound and flung all its legs and arms to the winds.

“My, but that scarecrow ’as got ’em bad!” said Ortheris. “Seems like if ’e comes any furdur we’ll ’ave to argify with ’im.”

Learoyd raised himself from the dirt as a bull clears his flanks of the wallow. And as a bull bellows, so he, after a short minute at gaze, gave tongue to the stars.

“MULVAANEY! MULVAANEY! A-hoo!”

Oh then it was that we yelled, and the figure dipped into the hollow, till, with a crash of rending grass, the lost one strode up to the light of the fire, and disappeared to the waist in a wave of joyous dogs! Then Learoyd and Ortheris gave greeting, bass and falsetto together, both swallowing a lump in the throat.

“You damned fool!” said they, and severally pounded him with their fists.

“Go easy!” he answered, wrapping a huge arm round each. “I would have you to know that I am a god, to be treated as such — tho’, by

my faith, I fancy I've got to go to the guard-room just like a privit soldier."

The latter part of the sentence destroyed the suspicions raised by the former. Any one would have been justified in regarding Mulvaney as mad. He was hatless and shoeless, and his shirt and trousers were dropping off him. But he wore one wondrous garment—a gigantic cloak that fell from collar-bone to heel—of pale pink silk, wrought all over, in cunningest needlework of hands long since dead, with the loves of the Hindu gods. The monstrous figures leaped in and out of the light of the fire as he settled the folds round him.

Ortheris handled the stuff respectfully for a moment, while I was trying to remember where I had seen it before. Then he screamed, "What 'ave you done with the palanquin? You're wearin' the linin'."

"I am," said the Irishman, "an' by the same token the 'broidery is scrapin' my hide off. I've lived in this sumpshus counterpane for four days. Me son, I begin to ondherstand why the naygur is no use. Widout me boots, an' me trousies like an openwork stocking on a gyurl's leg at a dance, I begin to feel like a naygur-man—all fearful an' timoreous. Give me a poipe an' I'll tell on."

He lit a pipe, resumed his grip of his two friends, and rocked to and fro in a gale of laughter.

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“Mulvaney,” said Ortheris sternly, “’taint no time for laughin’. You’ve given Jock an’ me more trouble than you’re worth. You ’ave been absent without leave, an’ you’ll go into cells for that; an’ you ’ave come back disgustin’ly dressed an’ most improper in the linin’ o’ that bloomin’ palanquin. Instid of which you laugh. An’ *we* thought you was dead all the time.”

“Bhoys,” said the culprit, still shaking gently, “whin I’ve done my tale you may cry if you like, an’ little Orth’ris here can thrample my inside out. Ha’ done an’ listen. My performinces have been stupenjus: my luck has been the blessed luck av the British Army—an’ there’s no betther than that. I went out dhrunk an’ dhrinkin’ in the palanquin, and I have come back a pink god. Did any of you go to Dearsley afther my time was up? He was at the bottom of ut all.”

“Ah said so,” murmured Learoyd. “To-morrow ah’ll smash t’ face in upon his heead.”

“Ye will not. Dearsley’s a jool av a man. Afther Ortheris had put me into the palanquin an’ the six bearer-men were gruntin’ down the road, I tuk thought to mock Dearsley for that fight. So I tould thim, ‘Go to the embankmint,’ and there, bein’ most amazin’ full, I shtuck my head out av the concern an’ passed compliments wid Dearsley. I must ha’ miscalled him outrageous, for whin I am that way the power av the

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tongue comes on me. I can bare remimber tellin' him that his mouth opened endways like the mouth av a skate, which was throe afther Learoyd had handled ut; an' I clear remimber his takin' no manner nor matter av offence, but givin' me a big dhrink of beer. 'Twas the beer did the thrick, for I crawled back into the palanquin, steppin' on me right ear wid me left foot, an' thin I slept like the dead. Wanst I half-roused, an' begad the noise in my head was tremenjuss — roarin' and rattlin' an' poundin', such as was quite new to me. 'Mother av Mercy,' thinks I, 'fwhat a concertina I will have on my shoulders whin I wake!' An' wid that I curls mysilf up to sleep before ut should get hould on me. Bhoys, that noise was not dhrink, 'twas the rattle av a thrain!"

There followed an impressive pause.

"Yes, he had put me on a thrain — put me, palanquin and all, an' six black assassins av his own coolies that was in his nefarious confidence, on the flat of a ballast-thruck, and we were rowlin' an' bowlin' along to Benares. Glory be that I did not wake up thin an' introjuce mysilf to the coolies. As I was sayin', I slept for the betther part av a day an' a night. But remimber you, that that man Dearsley had packed me off on wan av his material-thrains to Benares, all for to make me overstay my leave an' get me into the cells."

The explanation was an eminently rational one.



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Benares lay at least ten hours by rail from the cantonments, and nothing in the world could have saved Mulvaney from arrest as a deserter had he appeared there in the apparel of his orgies. Dearsley had not forgotten to take revenge. Learoyd, drawing back a little, began to place soft blows over selected portions of Mulvaney's body. His thoughts were away on the embankment, and they meditated evil for Dearsley. Mulvaney continued—

“Whin I was full awake the palanquin was set down in a street, I suspicioned, for I cud hear people passin' an' talkin'. But I knew well I was far from home. There is a queer smell upon our cantonments—a smell av dried earth and brick-kilns wid whiffs av cavalry stable-litter. This place smelt marigold flowers an' bad wather, an' wanst somethin' alive came an' blew heavy with his muzzle at the chink av the shutter. ‘It's in a village I am,’ thinks I to mysilf, ‘an' the parochial buffalo is investigatin' the palanquin.’ But anyways I had no desire to move. Only lie still whin you're in foreign parts, an' the standin' luck av the British Army will carry ye through. That is an epigram. I made ut.

“Thin a lot av wishperin' divils surrounded the palanquin. ‘Take ut up,’ sez wan man. ‘But who'll pay us?’ sez another. ‘The Maharanee's minister, av coorse,’ sez the man. ‘Oho!’ sez I to mysilf, ‘I'm a quane in me own right, wid a



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minister to pay me expenses. I'll be an emperor if I lie still long enough; but this is no village I've found.' I lay quiet, but I gummed me right eye to a crack av the shutters, an' I saw that the whole street was crammed wid palanquins an' horses, an' a sprinklin' av naked priests all yellow powder an' tigers' tails. But I may tell you, Orth'ris, an' you, Learoyd, that av all the palanquins ours was the most imperial an' magnificent. Now a palanquin means a native lady all the world over, except whin a soldier av the Quane happens to be takin' a ride. 'Women an' priests?' sez I. 'Your father's son is in the right pew this time, Terence. There will be proceedin's.' Six black divils in pink muslin tuk up the palanquin, an' oh! but the rowlin' an' the rockin' made me sick. Thin we got fair jammed among the palanquins—not more than fifty av them—an' we grated an' bumped like Queenstown potato-smacks in a runnin' tide. I cud hear the women gigglin' and squirkin' in their palanquins, but mine was the royal equipage. They made way for ut, an', begad, the pink muslin men o' mine were howlin', 'Room for the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun.' Do you know aught av the lady, Sorr?"

"Yes," said I. "She is a very estimable old queen of the Central Indian States, and they say she is fat. How on earth could she go to Benares without all the city knowing her palanquin?"

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“’Twas the eternal foolishness av the naygur-men. They saw the palanquin lying loneful an’ forlornsome, an’ the beauty av ut, after Dearsley’s men had dhropped ut and gone away, an’ they gave ut the best name that occurred to thim. Quite right too. For aught we know, the ould lady was thravellin’ *incog* — like me. I’m glad to hear she’s fat. I was no light weight mysilf, an’ my men were mortal anxious to dhrop me under a great big archway promiscuously ornamented wid the most improper carvin’s an’ cuttin’s I iver saw. Begad! they made me blush — like a — like a Maharanee.”

“The temple of Prithi-Devi,” I murmured, remembering the monstrous horrors of that sculptured archway at Benares.

“Pretty Devilskins, savin’ your presence, Sorr! There was nothin’ pretty about ut, except me. ’Twas all half dhark, an’ whin the coolies left they shut a big black gate behind av us, an’ half a company av fat yellow priests began pully-haulin’ the palanquins into a dharker place yet — a big stone hall full av pillars, an’ gods, an’ incense, an’ all manner av similar thruck. The gate disconcerted me, for I perceived I wud have to go forward to get out, my retreat bein’ cut off. By the same token, a good priest makes a bad palanquin-coolie. Begad! they nearly turned me inside out draggin’ the palanquin to the temple. Now the dispo

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sishin av the forces inside was this way. The Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun — that was me — lay by the favour av Providence on the far left flank behind the dhark av a pillar carved with elephints' heads. The remainder av the palanquins was in a big half circle facing in to the biggest, fattest, an' most amazin' she-god that iver I dreamed av. Her head ran up into the black above us, an' her feet stuck out in the light av a little fire av melted butter that a priest was feedin' out av a butter-dish. Thin a man began to sing an' play on somethin' back in the dhark, and 'twas a queer song. Ut made my hair lift on the back av my neck. Thin the doors av all the palanquins slid back, an' the women bundled out. I saw what I'll niver see again. 'Twas more glorious than thransformations at a pantomime, for they was in pink an' blue an' silver an' red an' grass green, wid di'monds an' im'ralsds an' great red rubies all over thim. But that was the least part av the glory. O bhoys, they were more lovely than the like av any loveliness in hiven; ay, their little bare feet were better than the white hands av a lord's lady, an' their mouths were like puckered roses, an' their eyes were bigger an' dharker than the eyes of any livin' women I've seen. Ye may laugh, but I'm speakin' truth. I niver saw the like, an' niver I will again."

"Seeing that in all probability you were watching the wives and daughters of most of the kings

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of India, the chances are that you won't," I said, for it was dawning on me that Mulvaney had stumbled upon a big Queens' Praying at Benares.

"I niver will," he said mournfully. "That sight doesn't come twist to any man. It made me ashamed to watch. A fat priest knocked at my door. I didn't think he'd have the insolence to disturb the Maharanee av Gokral-Seetarun, so I lay still. 'The old cow's asleep,' sez he to another. 'Let her be,' sez that. 'Twill be long before she has a calf!' I might ha' known before he spoke that all a woman prays for in Injia — an' for matter o' that in England too — is childher. That made me more sorry I'd come, me bein', as you well know, a childless man."

He was silent for a moment, thinking of his little son, dead many years ago.

"They prayed, an' the butter-fires blazed up, an' the incense turned everything blue, an' between that an' the fires the women looked as tho' they were all ablaze an' twinklin'. They took hold av the she-god's knees, they cried out an' they threw themselves about, an' that world-without-end-amen music was dhrivin' thim mad. Mother av Hiven! how they cried, an' the ould she-god grinnin' above thim all so scornful! The dhrink was dyin' out in me fast, an' I was thinkin' harder than the thoughts wud go through my head — thinkin' how to get out, an' all manner

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of nonsense as well. The women were rockin' in rows, their di'mond belts clickin', an' the tears runnin' out betune their hands, an' the lights were goin' lower an' dharker. Thin there was a blaze like lightnin' from the roof, an' that showed me the inside av the palanquin, an' at the end where my foot was, stood the livin' spit an' image o' mysilf worked on the linin'. This man here, ut was."

He hunted in the folds of his pink cloak, ran a hand under one, and thrust into the firelight a foot-long embroidered presentment of the great god Krishna playing on a flute. The heavy jowl, the staring eye, and the blue-black moustache of the god made up a far-off resemblance to Mulvaney.

"The blaze was gone in a wink, but the whole schame came to me thin. I believe I was mad too. I siid the off-shutter open an' rowled out into the dhark behind the elephint-head pillar, tucked up my trousies to my knees, slipped off my boots, an' tuk a general hould av all the pink linin' av the palanquin. Glory be, ut ripped out like a woman's dhriss whin you tread on ut at a sergeants' ball, an' a bottle came with ut. I tuk the bottle an' the next minut I was out av the dhark av the pillar, the pink linin' wrapped round me most graceful, the music thunderin' like ket-tledrums, an' a could draft blowin' round my bare

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legs. By this hand that did ut, I was Khrishna tootlin' on the flute — the god that the rig'mental chaplain talks about. A sweet sight I must ha' looked. I knew my eyes were big, and my face was wax-white, an' at the worst I must ha' looked like a ghost. But they took me for the livin' god. The music stopped, and the women were dead dumb, an' I crooked my legs like a shepherd on a china basin, an' I did the ghost-waggle with my feet as I had done ut at the rig'mental theatre many times, an' I slid acrost the width av that temple in front av the she-god, tootlin' on the beer-bottle."

"Wot did you toot?" demanded Ortheris the practical.

"Me? Oh!" Mulvaney sprang up, suiting the action to the word, and sliding gravely in front of us, a dilapidated but imposing deity in the half light. "I sang —

"Only say  
You'll be Mrs. Brallaghan.  
Don't say nay,  
Charmin' Judy Callaghan.

I didn't know me own voice when I sang. An' oh! 'twas pitiful to see the women. The darlin's were down on their faces. Whin I passed the last wan I cud see her poor little fingers workin' one in another as if she wanted to touch my feet. So I dhrew the tail av this pink overcoat over her



head for the greater honour, an' I slid into the dhark on the other side av the temple, and fetched up in the arms av a big fat priest. All I wanted was to get away clear. So I tuk him by his greasy throat an' shut the speech out av him. 'Out!' sez I. 'Which way, ye fat heathen?'— 'Oh!' sez he. 'Man,' sez I. 'White man, soldier man, common soldier man. Where in the name av confusion is the back door?' The women in the temple were still on their faces, an' a young priest was holdin' out his arms above their heads.

" 'This way,' sez my fat friend, duckin' behind a big bull-god an' divin' into a passage. Thin I remembered that I must ha' made the miraculous reputation av that temple for the next fifty years. 'Not so fast,' I sez, an' I held out both my hands wid a wink. That ould thief smiled like a father. I tuk him by the back av the neck in case he should be wishful to put a knife into me unbeknownst, an' I ran him up an' down the passage twice to collect his sensibilities! 'Be quiet,' sez he, in English. 'Now you talk sense,' I sez. 'Fwhat'll you give me for the use av that most iligant palanquin I have no time to take away?' — 'Don't tell,' sez he. 'Is ut like?' sez I. 'But ye might give me my railway fare. I'm far from my home an' I've done you a service.' Bhoys, 'tis a good thing to be a priest. The ould man



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niver troubled himself to dhraw from a bank. As I will prove to you subsequint, he philandered all round the slack av his clothes an' began dribblin' ten-rupee notes, old gold mohurs, and rupees into my hand till I could hould no more."

"You lie!" said Ortheris. "You're mad or sunstrook. A native don't give coin unless you cut it out o' 'im. 'Tain't nature."

"Then my lie an' my sunstroke is concealed under that lump av sod yonder," retorted Mulvaney unruffled, nodding across the scrub. "An' there's a dale more in nature than your squidgy little legs have iver taken you to, Orth'ris, me son. Four hundred an' thirty-four rupees by my reckonin', *an'* a big fat gold necklace that I took from him as a remimbrancer, was our share in that business."

"An' 'e give it you for love?" said Ortheris.

"We were alone in that passage. Maybe I was a trifle too pressin', but considher fwhat I had done for the good av the temple and the iverlastin' joy av those women. 'Twas cheap at the price. I wud ha' taken more if I cud ha' found ut. I turned the ould man upside down at the last, but he was milked dhry. Thin he opened a door in another passage, an' I found mysilf up to my knees in Benares river-water, an' bad smellin' ut is. More by token, I had come out on the river-line close to the burnin'-ghaut and contagious to a cracklin'

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corpse. This was in the heart av the night, for I had been four hours in the temple. There was a crowd av boats tied up, so I tuk wan an' wint across the river. 'Thin I came home acrost country, lyin' up by day."

"How on earth did you manage?" I said.

"How did Sir Frederick Roberts get from Cabul to Candahar? He marched an' he niver tould how near he was to breakin' down. That's why he is fwhat he is. An' now—" Mulvaney yawned portentously. "Now I will go an' give mysilf up for absince widout leave. It's eight an' twenty days an' the rough end of the colonel's tongue in orderly-room, any way you look at ut. But 'tis cheap at the price."

"Mulvaney," said I softly. "If there happens to be any sort of excuse that the colonel can in any way accept, I have a notion that you'll get nothing more than the dressing-down. The new recruits are in, and ——"

"Not a word more, Sorr. Is ut excuses the ould man wants? 'Tis not my way, but he shall have thim. I'll tell him I was engaged in financial operations connected wid a church," and he flapped his way to cantonments and the cells, singing lustily —

"So they sent a corp'ril's file,  
And they put me in the gyard-room  
For conduct unbecomin' of a soldier."

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And when he was lost in the midst of the moon-light we could hear the refrain —

“Bang upon the big drum, bash upon the cymbals,  
As we go marchin’ along, boys, oh!  
For although in this campaign  
There’s no whisky nor champagne,  
We’ll keep our spirits goin’ with a song, boys!”

Therewith he surrendered himself to the joyful and almost weeping guard, and was made much of by his fellows. But to the colonel he said that he had been smitten with sunstroke and had lain insensible on a villager’s cot for untold hours; and between laughter and good-will the affair was smoothed over, so that he could, next day, teach the new recruits how to “Fear God, Honour the Queen, Shoot Straight, and Keep Clean.”

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Did ye see John Malone, wid his shinin', brand-new hat ?

Did ye see how he walked like a grand aristocrat ?

There was flags an' banners wavin' high, an' dhress and shtyle  
were shown,

But the best av all the company was Misther John Malone.

*John Malone.*

THERE had been a royal dog-fight in the ravine at the back of the rifle-butts, between Learoyd's Jock and Ortheris's Blue Rot — both mongrel Rampur hounds, chiefly ribs and teeth. It lasted for twenty happy, howling minutes, and then Blue Rot collapsed and Ortheris paid Learoyd three rupees, and we were all very thirsty. A dog-fight is a most heating entertainment, quite apart from the shouting, because Rampurs fight over a couple of acres of ground. Later, when the sound of belt-badges clicking against the necks of beer-bottles had died away, conversation drifted from dog to man-fights of all kinds. Humans resemble red-deer in some respects. Any talk of fighting seems to wake up a sort of imp in their breasts, and they bell one to the other, exactly like challenging bucks. This is noticeable even in men who consider themselves

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superior to Privates of the Line: it shows the Refining Influence of Civilisation and the March of Progress.

Tale provoked tale, and each tale more beer. Even dreamy Learoyd's eyes began to brighten, and he unburdened himself of a long history in which a trip to Malham Cove, a girl at Pateley Brigg, a ganger, himself and a pair of clogs were mixed in drawling tangle.

"An' so Ah coot's yead oppen from t' chin to t' hair, an' he was abed for t' matter o' a month," concluded Learoyd pensively.

Mulvaney came out of a reverie—he was lying down—and flourished his heels in the air. "You're a man, Learoyd," said he critically, "but you've only fought wid men, an' that's an ivry-day expayrience; but I've stud up to a ghost, an' that was *not* an ivry-day expayrience."

"No?" said Ortheris, throwing a cork at him. "You git up an' address the 'ouse—you an' yer expayriences. Is it a bigger one nor usual?"

"'Twas the livin' trut'!" answered Mulvaney, stretching out a huge arm and catching Ortheris by the collar. "Now where are ye, me son? Will ye take the wurrud av the Lorrd out av my mouth another time?" He shook him to emphasise the question.

"No, somethin' else, though," said Ortheris, making a dash at Mulvaney's pipe, capturing

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it and holding it at arm's length; "I'll chuck it acrost the ditch if you don't let me go!"

"You maraudin' hathen! 'Tis the only cutty I iver loved. Handle her tinder or I'll chuck *you* acrost the nullah. If that poipe was bruk — Ah! Give her back to me, Sórr!"

Ortheris had passed the treasure to my hand. It was an absolutely perfect clay, as shiny as the black ball at Pool. I took it reverently, but I was firm.

"Will you tell us about the ghost-fight if I do?" I said.

"Is ut the shtory that's troublin' you? Av coorse I will. I mint to all along. I was only gettin' at ut my own way, as Popp Doggle said whin they found him thrying to ram a cartridge down the muzzle. Orth'ris, fall away!"

He released the little Londoner, took back his pipe, filled it, and his eyes twinkled. He has the most eloquent eyes of any one that I know.

"Did I iver tell you," he began, "that I was wanst the divil av a man?"

"You did," said Learoyd, with a childish gravity that made Ortheris yell with laughter, for Mulvaney was always impressing upon us his great merits in the old days.

"Did I iver tell you," Mulvaney continued calmly, "that I was wanst more av a divil than I am now?"

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“Mer—ria! You don’t mean it?” said Ortheris.

“Whin I was Corp’ril — I wus rejuçed aftherwards — but, as I say, *whin* I was Corp’ril, I was a divil av a man.”

He was silent for nearly a minute, while his mind rummaged among old memories and his eye glowed. He bit upon the pipe-stem and charged into his tale.

“Eyah! They was great times. I’m ould now; me hide’s wore off in patches; sinthrygo has disconceited me, an’ I’m a married man tu. But I’ve had my day — I’ve had my day, an’ nothin’ can take away the taste av that! Oh, my time past, whin I put me fut through ivry livin’ wan av the Tin Commandmints between Revelly and Lights Out, blew the froth off a pewter, wiped me moustache wid the back av me hand, an’ slept on ut all as quiet as a little child! But ut’s over — ut’s over, an’ ’twill niver come back to me; not though I prayed for a week av Sundays. Was there *any* wan in the Ould Rig’mint to touch Corp’ril Terence Mulvaney whin that same was turned out for sedukshin? I niver met him. Ivry woman that was not a witch was worth the runnin’ afther in those days, an’ ivry man was my dearest frind or — I had stripped to him an’ we knew which was the betther av the tu.

“Whin I was a Corp’ril I wud not ha’ changed



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wid the Colonel — no, nor yet the Commandher-in-Chief. I wud be a Sargint. There was nothin' I wud not be! Mother av Hivin, look at me! Fwhat am I *now*?

“We was quartered in a big cantonmint—’tis no manner of use namin’ names, for ut might give the barricks disreputation — an’ I was the Imperor av the Earth to my own mind, an’ wan or tu women thought the same. Small blame to thim. After we had lain there a year, Bragin, the Colour-Sargint av E Comp’ny, wint an’ took a wife that was lady’s maid to some big lady in the Station. She’s dead now, is Annie Bragin — died in child-bed at Kirpa Tal, or ut may ha’ been Almorah — seven — nine years gone, an’ Bragin he married agin. But she was a pretty woman whin Bragin inthrojuiced her to cantonmint society. She had eyes like the brown av a buttherfly’s wing whin the sun catches ut, an’ a waist no thicker than my arm, an’ a little sof’ button av a mouth I would ha’ gone through all Asia bristlin’ wid bay’nits to get the kiss av. An’ her hair was as long as the tail av the Colonel’s charger — forgive me mentionin’ that blunderin’ baste in the same mouthful with Annie Bragin — but ’twas all shpun gold, an’ time was when a lock av ut was more than di’monds to me. There was niver pretty woman yet, an’ I’ve had thruck wid a few, cud open the door to Annie Bragin.

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“’Twas in the Cath’lic Chapel I saw her first, me oi rolling round as usual to see fwat was to be seen. ‘You’re too good for Bragin, my love,’ thinks I to mesilf, ‘but that’s a mistake I can put straight, or my name is not Terence Mulvaney.’

“Now take my wurd for ut, you Orth’ris there an’ Learoyd, an’ kape out av the Married Quarters — as I did not. No good iver comes av ut, an’ there’s always the chance av your bein’ found wid your face in the dirt, a long picket in the back av your head, an’ your hands playing the fifes on the tread av another man’s doorstep. ’Twas so we found O’Hara, he that Rafferty killed six years gone, when he wint to his death wid his hair oiled, whistlin’ ‘Larry O’Rourke’ betune his teeth. Kape out av the Married Quarters, I say, as I did not. ’Tis onwholesim, ’tis dangerous, an’ ’tis ivrything else that’s bad, but — O my sowl, ’tis swate while ut lasts!

“I was always hangin’ about there whin I was off duty an’ Bragin wasn’t, but niver a sweet word beyon’ ordinar’ did I get from Annie Bragin. ‘’Tis the pervarsity av the sect,’ sez I to mesilf, an’ gave my cap another cock on my head an’ straightened my back — ’twas the back av a Dhrum-Major in those days — an’ wint off as tho’ I did not care, wid all the women in the Married Quarters laughin’. I was pershuaded — most bhoys *are*,

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I'm thinkin' — that no woman born av woman cud stand against me av I hild up my little finger. I had reason fer thinkin' that way — till I met Annie Bragin.

"Time an' agin whin I was blandandherin' in the dusk a man wud go past me as quiet as a cat. 'That's quare,' thinks I, 'for I am, or I should be, the only man in these parts. Now what divilment can Annie be up to?' Thin I called myself a blayguard for thinkin' such things; but I thought thim all the same. An' that, mark you, is the way av a man.

"Wan evenin' I said:—'Mrs. Bragin, manin' no disrespect to you, who is that Corp'ril man' — I had seen the stripes, though I cud niver get sight av his face — '*who* is that Corp'ril man that comes in always whin I'm goin' away?'

"'Mother av God!' sez she, turnin' as white as my belt; 'have *you* seen him too?'

"'Seen him?' sez I; 'av coorse I have. Did ye want me not to see him, for' — we were standin' talkin' in the dhark, outside the verandah av Bragin's quarters — 'you'd betther tell me to shut me eyes. Unless I'm mistaken, he's come now.'

"An', sure enough, the Corp'ril man was walkin' to us, hangin' his head down as though he was ashamed av himself.

"'Good-night, Mrs. Bragin,' sez I, very cool; 'tis not for me to interfere wid your *a-moors*; but

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you might manage some things wid more dacincy. I'm off to canteen,' I sez.

"I turned on my heel an' wint away, swearin' I wud give that man a dhressin' that wud shtop him messin' about the Married Quarters for a month an' a week. I had not tuk ten paces before Annie Bragin was hangin' on to my arm, an' I cud feel that she was shakin' all over.

"‘Stay wid me, Mister Mulvaney,’ sez she; ‘you’re flesh an’ blood, at the least — are ye not?’

"‘I’m *all* that,’ sez I, an’ my anger wint away in a flash. ‘Will I want to be asked twice, Annie?’

"Wid that I slipped my arm round her waist, for, begad, I fancied she had surrendered at discretion, an’ the honours av war were mine.

"‘Fwhat nonsinse is this?’ sez she, dhrawin’ hersilf up on the tips av her dear little toes. ‘Wid the mother’s milk not dhry on your impident mouth? Let go!’ she sez.

"‘Did ye not say just now that I was flesh and blood?’ sez I. ‘I have not changed since,’ I sez; an’ I kep’ my arm where ut was.

"‘Your arms to yoursilf!’ sez she, an’ her eyes sparkild.

"‘Sure, ’tis only human nature,’ sez I, an’ I kep’ my arm where ut was.

"‘Nature or no nature,’ sez she, ‘you take your arm away or I’ll tell Bragin, an’ he’ll alter the nature av your head. Fwhat d’you take me for?’ she sez.

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“ ‘A woman,’ sez I; ‘the prettiest in barricks.’

“ ‘A *wife*,’ sez she; ‘the straightest in canton-mints!’

“ Wid that I dropped my arm, fell back tu paces, an’ saluted, for I saw that she mint fwhat she said.”

“ Then you know something that some men would give a good deal to be certain of. How could you tell?” I demanded in the interests of Science.

“ Watch the hand,” said Mulvaney; “av she shuts her hand tight, thumb down over the knuckle, take up your hat an’ go. You’ll only make a fool av yourself av you shtay. But av the hand lies opin on the lap, or av you see her thryin’ to shut ut, an’ she can’t — go on! She’s not past reasonin’ wid.

“ Well, as I was sayin’, I fell back, saluted, an’ was goin’ away.

“ ‘Shtay wid me,’ she sez. ‘Look! He’s comin’ again.’

“ She pointed to the verandah, an’ by the Hoight av Impart’nince, the Corp’ril man was comin’ out av Bragin’s quarters.

“ ‘He’s done that these five evenin’s past,’ sez Annie Bragin. ‘Oh, fwhat will I do!’

“ ‘He’ll not do ut again,’ sez I, for I was fightin’ mad.

“ Kape away from a man that has been a thrifle

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crossed in love till the fever's died down. He rages like a brute baste.

"I wint up to the man in the verandah, manin', as sure as I sit, to knock the life out av him. He slipped into the opin. 'Fwhat are you doin' phillanderin' about here, ye scum av the gutter?' sez I polite, to give him his warnin', for I wanted him ready.

"He niver lifted his head, but sez, all mournful an' melancolius, as if he thought I wud be sorry for him: 'I can't find her,' sez he.

"'My troth,' sez I, 'you've lived too long — you an' your seekin's an' findin's in a dacint married woman's quarters! Hould up your head, ye frozen thief av Genesis,' sez I, 'an' you'll find all you want an' more!'

"But he niver hild up, an' I let go from the shoulther to where the hair is short over the eye-brows.

"'That'll do your business,' sez I, but ut nearly did mine instid. I put my bodyweight behind the blow, but I hit nothing at all, an' near put my shoulther out. The Corp'ril man was not there, an' Annie Bragin, who had been watchin' from the verandah, throws up her heels, an' carries on like a cock whin his neck's wrung by the dhrummer-bhoy. I wint back to her, for a livin' woman, an' a woman like Annie Bragin, is more than a p'rade-groun' full av ghosts. I'd niver seen a



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woman faint before, an' I stud like a shtuck calf, askin' her whether she was dead, an' prayin' her for the love av me, an' the love av her husband, an' the love av the Virgin, to opin her blessed eyes again, an' callin' mesilf all the names undher the canopy av Hivin for plaguin' her wid my miserable *a-moors* whin I ought to ha' stud betune her an' this Corp'ril man that had lost the number av his mess.

"I misremimber fwhat nonsinse I said, but I was not so far gone that I cud not hear a fut on the dirt outside. 'Twas Bragin comin' in, an' by the same token Annie was comin' to. I jumped to the far end av the verandah, an' looked as if butter wudn't melt in my mouth. But Mrs. Quinn, the Quarter-Master's wife that was, had tould Bragin about my hangin' round Annie.

"'I'm not pleased wid you, Mulvaney,' sez Bragin, unbucklin' his sword, for he had been on duty.

"'That's bad hearin',' I sez, an' I knew that the pickets were dhriven in. 'What for, Sargint?' sez I.

"'Come outside,' sez he, 'an' I'll show you why.'

"'I'm willin',' I sez; 'but my stripes are none so ould that I can afford to lose thim. Tell me now, *who* do I go out wid?' sez I.

"He was a quick man an' a just, an' saw fwhat



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I wud be afther. ‘Wid Mrs. Bragin’s husband,’ sez he. He might ha’ known by me askin’ that favour that I had done him no wrong.

“We wint to the back av the arsenal an’ I stripped to him, an’ for ten minutes ’twas all I cud do to prevent him killin’ himself against my fistes. He was mad as a dumb dog — just frothing wid rage; but he had no chanst wid me in reach, or learnin’, or anything else.

“‘Will ye hear reason?’ sez I, whin his first wind was run out.

“‘Not whoile I can see,’ sez he. Wid that I gave him both, one after the other, smash through the low gyard that he’d been taught whin he was a boy, an’ the eyebrow shut down on the cheek-bone like the wing av a sick crow.

“‘Will you hear reason now, ye brave man?’ sez I.

“‘Not whoile I can speak,’ sez he, staggerin’ up blind as a stump. I was loath to do ut, but I wint round an’ swung into the jaw side-on an’ shifted ut a half pace to the lef’.

“‘Will ye hear reason now?’ sez I; ‘I can’t keep my timper much longer, an’ ’tis like I will hurt you.’

“‘Not whoile I can stand,’ he mumbles out av one corner av his mouth. So I closed an’ threw him — blind, dumb, an’ sick, an’ jammed the jaw straight.

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“ ‘You’re an ould fool, *Mister Bragin*,’ sez I.

“ ‘You’re a young thief,’ sez he, ‘an you’ve bruk my heart, you an’ Annie betune you!’

“ Thin he began cryin’ like a child as he lay. I was sorry as I had niver been before. ’Tis an awful thing to see a strong man cry.

“ ‘I’ll swear on the Cross!’ sez I.

“ ‘I care for none av your oaths,’ sez he.

“ ‘Come back to your quarters,’ sez I, ‘an’ if you don’t believe the livin’, begad, you shall listen to the dead,’ I sez.

“ I hoisted him an’ tuk him back to his quarters. ‘Mrs. Bragin,’ sez I, ‘here’s a man that you can cure quicker than me.’

“ ‘You’ve shamed me before my wife,’ he whimpers.

“ ‘Have I so?’ sez I. ‘By the look on Mrs. Bragin’s face I think I’m for a dhressin’-down worse than I gave you.’

“An’ I was! Annie Bragin was woild wid indignation. There was not a name that a dacint woman cud use that was not given my way. I’ve had my Colonel walk roun’ me like a cooper roun’ a cask for fifteen minuts in Ord’ly Room, bekaze I wint into the Corner Shop an unstrapped lewnatic; but all that I iver tuk from his rasp av a tongue was ginger-pop to fwhat Annie tould me. An’ that, mark you, is the way av a woman.

“Whin ut was done for want av breath, an’

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Annie was bendin' over her husband, I sez: "'Tis all thrue, an' I'm a blayguard an' you're an honest woman; but will you tell him of wan service that I did you?'

"As I finished speakin' the Corp'ril man came up to the verandah, an' Annie Bragin shquealed. The moon was up, an' we cud see his face.

"'I can't find her,' sez the Corp'ril man, an' wint out like the puff av a candle.

"'Saints stand betune us an' evil!' sez Bragin, crossin' himself; 'that's Flahy av the Tyrone.'

"'Who was he?' I sez, 'for he has given me a dale av fightin' this day.'

"Bragin tould us that Flahy was a Corp'ril who lost his wife av cholera in those quarters three years gone, an' wint mad, an' *walked* afther they buried him, huntin' for her.

"'Well,' sez I to Bragin, 'he's been hookin out av Purgathory to kape company wid Mrs. Bragin ivry evenin' for the last fortnight. You may tell Mrs. Quinn, wid my love, for I know that she's been talkin' to you, an' you've been listenin', that she ought to ondherstand the differ 'twixt a man an' a ghost. She's had three husbands,' sez I, 'an' *you've* got a wife too good for you. Instid av which you lave her to be boddered by ghosts an'—an' all manner av evil spiruts. I'll niver go talkin' in the way av poitness to a man's wife again. Good-night to you

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both,' sez I, an' wid that I wint away, havin' fought wid woman, man and divil all in the heart av an hour. By the same token, I gave Father Victor wan rupee to say a mass for Flahy's soul, me havin' discommoded him by shticking my fist into his systim."

"Your ideas of politeness seem rather large, Mulvaney," I said.

"That's as you look at ut," said Mulvaney calmly; "Annie Bragin niver cared for me. For all that, I did not want to leave anything behin' me that Bragin could take hould av to be angry wid her about — whin an honust wurrd cud ha' cleared all up. There's nothing like opin-speakin'. Orth'ris, ye scutt, let me put me oi to that bottle, for my throat's as dhry as whin I thought I wud get a kiss from Annie Bragin. An' that's fourteen years gone! Eyah! Cork's own city an' the blue sky above ut — an' the times that was — the times that was!"

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What did the colonel's lady think ?  
Nobody never knew.  
Somebody asked the sergeant's wife  
An' she told 'em true.  
When you git to a man in the case  
They're like a row o' pins,  
For the colonel's lady an' Judy O'Grady  
Are sisters under their skins.

*Barrack-Room Ballad.*

ALL day I had followed at the heels of a pursuing army engaged on one of the finest battles that ever camp of exercise beheld. Thirty thousand troops had by the wisdom of the Government of India been turned loose over a few thousand square miles of country to practise in peace what they would never attempt in war. Consequently cavalry charged unshaken infantry at the trot. Infantry captured artillery by frontal attacks delivered in line of quarter columns, and mounted infantry skirmished up to the wheels of an armoured train which carried nothing more deadly than a twenty-five pounder Armstrong, two Nordenfeldts, and a few score volunteers all cased in

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three-eighths-inch boiler-plate. Yet it was a very life-like camp. Operations did not cease at sundown; nobody knew the country and nobody spared man or horse. There was unending cavalry scouting and almost unending forced work over broken ground. The Army of the South had finally pierced the centre of the Army of the North, and was pouring through the gap hot-foot to capture a city of strategic importance. Its front extended fanwise, the sticks being represented by regiments strung out along the line of route backwards to the divisional transport columns and all the lumber that trails behind an army on the move. On its right the broken left of the Army of the North was flying in mass, chased by the Southern horse and hammered by the Southern guns till these had been pushed far beyond the limits of their last support. Then the flying sat down to rest, while the elated commandant of the pursuing force telegraphed that he held all in check and observation.

Unluckily he did not observe that three miles to his right flank a flying column of Northern horse with a detachment of Ghoorkhas and British troops had been pushed round, as fast as the failing light allowed, to cut across the entire rear of the Southern Army, to break, as it were, all the ribs of the fan where they converged by striking at the transport, reserve ammunition, and artillery

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supplies. Their instructions were to go in, avoiding the few scouts who might not have been drawn off by the pursuit, and create sufficient excitement to impress the Southern Army with the wisdom of guarding their own flank and rear before they captured cities. It was a pretty manœuvre, neatly carried out.

Speaking for the second division of the Southern Army, our first intimation of the attack was at twilight, when the artillery were labouring in deep sand, most of the escort were trying to help them out, and the main body of the infantry had gone on. A Noah's Ark of elephants, camels, and the mixed menagerie of an Indian transport-train bubbled and squealed behind the guns, when there appeared from nowhere in particular British infantry to the extent of three companies, who sprang to the heads of the gun-horses and brought all to a standstill amid oaths and cheers.

"How's that, umpire?" said the major commanding the attack, and with one voice the drivers and limber gunners answered "Hout!" while the colonel of artillery sputtered.

"All your scouts are charging our main body," said the major. "Your flanks are unprotected for two miles. I think we've broken the back of this division. And listen—there go the Ghoorkhas!"

A weak fire broke from the rear-guard more than a mile away, and was answered by cheerful



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howlings. The Ghoorkhas, who should have swung clear of the second division, had stepped on its tail in the dark, but, drawing off, hastened to reach the next line of attack, which lay almost parallel to us five or six miles away.

Our column swayed and surged irresolutely — three batteries, the divisional ammunition reserve, the baggage, and a section of the hospital and bearer corps. The commandant ruefully promised to report himself “cut up” to the nearest umpire, and commending his cavalry and all other cavalry to the special care of Eblis, toiled on to resume touch with the rest of the division.

“We’ll bivouac here to-night,” said the major, “I have a notion that the Ghoorkhas will get caught. They may want us to re-form on. Stand easy till the transport gets away.”

A hand caught my beast’s bridle and led him out of the choking dust; a larger hand deftly canted me out of the saddle; and two of the hugest hands in the world received me sliding. Pleasant is the lot of the special correspondent who falls into such hands as those of Privates Mulvaney, Ortheris, and Learoyd.

“An’ that’s all right,” said the Irishman calmly. “We thought we’d find you somewheres here by. Is there anything av yours in the transport? Or-th’ris ’ll fetch ut out.”

Ortheris did “fetch ut out,” from under the

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trunk of an elephant, in the shape of a servant and an animal both laden with medical comforts. The little man's eyes sparkled.

"If the brutal an' licentious soldiery av these parts gets sight av the thruck," said Mulvaney, making practised investigation, "they'll loot iv'ry-thing. They're bein' fed on iron-filin's an' dog-biscuit these days, but glory's no compensation for a belly-ache. Praise be, we're here to protect you, Sorr. Beer, sausage, bread (soft, an' that's a cur'osity), soup in a tin, whisky by the smell av ut, an' fowls! Mother av Moses, but ye take the field like a confectioner! 'Tis scand'lus."

"'Ere's a orficer," said Ortheris significantly. "When the sergent's done lushin' the privit may clean the pot."

I bundled several things into Mulvaney's haversack before the major's hand fell on my shoulder and he said tenderly, "Requisitioned for the Queen's service. Wolseley was quite wrong about special correspondents: they are the soldier's best friends. Come and take pot-luck with us to-night."

And so it happened amid laughter and shout ings that my well-considered commissariat melted away to reappear later at the mess-table, which was a waterproof sheet spread on the ground. The flying column had taken three days' rations with it, and there be few things nastier than govern-

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ment rations — especially when government is experimenting with German toys. Erbsenwurst, tinned beef of surpassing tinniness, compressed vegetables, and meat-biscuits may be nourishing, but what Thomas Atkins needs is bulk in his inside. The major, assisted by his brother officers, purchased goats for the camp and so made the experiment of no effect. Long before the fatigue-party sent to collect brushwood had returned, the men were settled down by their valises, kettles and pots had appeared from the surrounding country and were dangling over fires as the kid and the compressed vegetable bubbled together; there rose a cheerful clinking of mess-tins; outrageous demands for “a little more stuffin’ with that there liver-wing;” and gust on gust of chaff as pointed as a bayonet and as delicate as a gun-butt.

“The boys are in a good temper,” said the major. “They’ll be singing presently. Well, a night like this is enough to keep them happy.”

Over our heads burned the wonderful Indian stars, which are not all pricked in on one plane, but, preserving an orderly perspective, draw the eye through the velvet darkness of the void up to the barred doors of heaven itself. The earth was a gray shadow more unreal than the sky. We could hear her breathing lightly in the pauses between the howling of the jackals, the movement of the wind in the tamarisks, and the fitful mutter

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of musketry-fire leagues away to the left. A native woman from some unseen hut began to sing, the mail-train thundered past on its way to Delhi, and a roosting crow cawed drowsily. Then there was a belt-loosening silence about the fires, and the even breathing of the crowded earth took up the story.

The men, full fed, turned to tobacco and song—their officers with them. The subaltern is happy who can win the approval of the musical critics in his regiment, and is honoured among the more intricate step-dancers. By him, as by him who plays cricket cleverly, Thomas Atkins will stand in time of need, when he will let a better officer go on alone. The ruined tombs of forgotten Musulman saints heard the ballad of “Agra Town,” “The Buffalo Battery,” “Marching to Kabul,” “The long, long Indian Day,” “The Place where the Punkah-coolie died,” and that crashing chorus which announces,

Youth's daring spirit, manhood's fire,  
Firm hand and eagle eye,  
Must he acquire who would aspire  
To see the gray boar die.

To-day, of all those jovial thieves who appropriated my commissariat and lay and laughed round that waterproof sheet, not one remains.

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They went to camps that were not of exercise and battles without umpires. Burma, the Soudan, and the frontier,—fever and fight,—took them in their time.

I drifted across to the men's fires in search of Mulvaney, whom I found strategically greasing his feet by the blaze. There is nothing particularly lovely in the sight of 'a private thus engaged after a long day's march, but when you reflect on the exact proportion of the "might, majesty, dominion, and power" of the British Empire which stands on those feet you take an interest in the proceedings.

"There's a blister, bad luck to ut, on the heel," said Mulvaney. "I can't touch ut. Prick ut out, little man."

Ortheris took out his house-wife, eased the trouble with a needle, stabbed Mulvaney in the calf with the same weapon, and was swiftly kicked into the fire.

"I've bruk the best av my toes over you, ye grinnin' child av disruption," said Mulvaney, sitting cross-legged and nursing his feet; then seeing me, "Oh, ut's you, Sorr! Be welkim, an' take that maraudin' scutt's place. Jock, hold him down on the cindhers for a bit."

But Ortheris escaped and went elsewhere, as I took possession of the hollow he had scraped for himself and lined with his greatcoat. Learoyd on

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the other side of the fire grinned affably and in a minute fell fast asleep.

"There's the height av politeness for you," said Mulvaney, lighting his pipe with a flaming branch. "But Jock's eaten half a box av your sardines at wan gulp, an' I think the tin too. What's the best wid you, Sorr, an' how did you happen to be on the losin' side this day whin we captured you?"

"The Army of the South is winning all along the line," I said.

"Then that line's the hangman's rope, savin' your presence. You'll learn to-morrow how we rethreated to dhraw thim on before we made thim trouble, an' that's what a woman does. By the same token, we'll be attacked before the dawnin', an' ut would be betther not to slip your boots. How do I know that? By the light av pure reason. Here are three companies av us ever so far inside av the enemy's flank, an' a crowd av roarin', tarin', squealin' cavalry gone on just to turn out the whole hornet's nest av them. Av coorse the enemy will pursue, by brigades like as not, an' thim we'll have to run for ut. Mark my words. I am av the opinion av Polonius whin he said, 'Don't fight wid ivry scutt for the pure joy av fightin', but if you do, knock the nose av him first an' frequent.' We ought to ha' gone on an' helped the Ghoorkhas."



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“But what do you know about Polonius?” I demanded. This was a new side of Mulvaney’s character.

“All that Shakespeare iver wrote an’ a dale more that the gallery shouted,” said the man of war, carefully lacing his boots. “Did I not tell you av Silver’s theatre in Dublin, whin I was younger than I ain now an’ a patron av the drama? Ould Silver wud never pay actor-man or woman their just dues, an’ by consequence his comp’nies was collapsible at the last minut. Thin the bhoys wud clamour to take a part, an’ oft as not ould Silver made them pay for the fun. Faith, I’ve seen Hamlut played wid a new black eye an’ the queen as full as a cornucopia. I remimber wanst Hogin that ’listed in the Black Tyrone an’ was shot in South Africa, he sejuiced ould Silver into givin’ him Hamlut’s part instid av me that had a fine fancy for rhetoric in those days. Av coorse I wint into the gallery an’ began to fill the pit wid other people’s hats, an’ I passed the time av day to Hogin walkin’ through Denmark like a hamstrung mule wid a pall on his back. ‘Hamlut,’ sez I, ‘there’s a hole in your heel. Pull up your shtockin’s, Hamlut,’ sez I. ‘Hamlut, Hamlut, for the love av dacincy dhrop that skull an’ pull up your shtockin’s.’ The whole house begun to tell him that. He stopped his soliloquishms mid-between. ‘My shtockin’s may



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be comin' down or they may not,' sez he, screwin' his eye into the gallery, for well he knew who I was. 'But afther this performince is over me an' the Ghost 'll trample the tripes out av you, Terence, wid your ass's bray!' An' that's how I come to know about Hamlut. Eyah! Those days, those days! Did you iver have onendin' divilment an' nothin' to pay for ut in your life, Sorr?"

"Never, without having to pay," I said.

"That's throe! 'Tis mane whin you considher on ut; but ut's the same wid horse or fut. A headache if you dhrink, an' a belly-ache if you eat too much, an' a heartache to kape all down. Faith, the baste only gets the colic, an' he's the lucky man."

He dropped his head and stared into the fire, fingering his moustache the while. From the far side of the bivouac the voice of Corbet-Nolan, senior subaltern of B Company, uplifted itself in an ancient and much appreciated song of sentiment, the men moaning melodiously behind him.

The north wind blew coldly, she drooped from that hour,  
My own little Kathleen, my sweet little Kathleen,  
Kathleen, my Kathleen, Kathleen O'Moore!

With forty-five O's in the last word: even at that distance you might have cut the soft South Irish accent with a shovel.

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“For all we take we must pay, but the price is cruel high,” murmured Mulvaney when the chorus had ceased.

“What’s the trouble?” I said gently, for I knew that he was a man of an inextinguishable sorrow.

“Hear now,” said he. “Ye know what I am now. I know what I mint to be at the beginnin’ av my service. I’ve tould you time an’ again, an’ what I have not Dinah Shadd has. An’ what am I? Oh, Mary Mother av Hiven, an ould dhrunken, untrustable baste av a privit that has seen the reg’ment change out from colonel to drummer-boy, not wanst or twice, but scores av times! Ay, scores! An’ me not so near gettin’ promotion as in the first! An’ me livin’ on an’ kapin’ clear av clink, not by my own good conduct, but the kindness av some orf’cer-bhoy young enough to be son to me! Do I not know ut? Can I not tell whin I’m passed over at p’rade, tho’ I’m rockin’ full av liquor an’ ready to fall all in wan piece, such as even a suckin’ child might see, bekaze, ‘Oh, ’tis only ould Mulvaney!’ An’ whin I’m let off in ord’ly-room through some thrick of the tongue an’ a ready answer an’ the ould man’s mercy, is ut smilin’ I feel whin I fall away an’ go back to Dinah Shadd, thryin’ to carry ut all off as a joke? Not I! ’Tis hell to me, dumb hell through ut all; an’ next time whin the fit comes I will be as bad again. Good cause the reg’mint has to know

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me for the best soldier in ut. Better cause have I to know mesilf for the worst man. I'm only fit to tache the new drafts what I'll niver learn mesilf; an' I am sure, as tho' I heard ut, that the minut wan av these pink-eyed recruities gets away from my 'Mind ye now,' an' 'Listen to this, Jim, bhoy,' — sure I am that the sargint houlds me up to him for a warnin'. So I tache, as they say at musketry instruction, by direct and ricochet fire. Lord be good to me, for I have stud some throuble!"

"Lie down and go to sleep," said I, not being able to comfort or advise. "You're the best man in the regiment, and, next to Ortheris, the biggest fool. Lie down and wait till we're attacked. What force will they turn out? Guns, think you?"

"Try that wid your lorrds an' ladies, twistin' an' turnin' the talk, tho' you mint ut well. Ye cud say nothin' to help me, an' yet ye niver knew what cause I had to be what I am."

"Begin at the beginning and go on to the end," I said royally. "But rake up the fire a bit, first."

I passed Ortheris's bayonet for a poker.

"That shows how little we know what we do," said Mulvaney, putting it aside. "Fire takes all the heart out av the steel, an' the next time, maybe, that our little man is fighting for his life his bradawl'll break, an' so you'll ha' killed him, manin' no more than to kape yourself warm. 'Tis

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a recruity's thrick that. Pass the clanin'-rod, Sorr."

I snuggled down abased; and after an interval the voice of Mulvaney began.

"Did I iver tell you how Dinah Shadd came to be wife av mine?"

I dissembled a burning anxiety that I had felt for some months — ever since Dinah Shadd, the strong, the patient, and the infinitely tender, had of her own good love and free will washed a shirt for me, moving in a barren land where washing was not.

"I can't remember," I said casually. "Was it before or after you made love to Annie Bragin, and got no satisfaction?"

The story of Annie Bragin is written in another place. It is one of the many less respectable episodes in Mulvaney's chequered career.

"Before — before — long before, was that business av Annie Bragin an' the corp'ril's ghost. Niver woman was the worse for me whin I had married Dinah. There's a time for all things, an' I know how to kape all things in place — barrin' the dhrink, that kapes me in my place wid no hope av comin' to be aught else."

"Begin at the beginning," I insisted. "Mrs. Mulvaney told me that you married her when you were quartered in Krab Bokhar barracks."

"An' the same is a cess-pit," said Mulvaney

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piously. "She spoke thrue, did Dinah. 'Twas this way. Talkin' av that, have ye iver fallen in love, Sorr?"

I preserved the silence of the damned. Mulvaney continued —

"Thin I will assume that ye have not. I did. In the days av my youth, as I have more than wanst tould you, I was a man that filled the eye an' delighted the sowl av women. Niver man was hated as I have been. Niver man was loved as I — no, not within half a day's march av ut! For the first five years av my service, whin I was what I wud give my sowl to be now, I tuk whatever was within my reach an' digested ut — an' that's more than most men can say. Dhrink I tuk, an' ut did me no harm. By the Hollow av Hiven, I cud play wid four women at wanst, an' kape them from findin' out anythin' about the other three, an' smile like a full-blown marigold through ut all. Dick Coulhan, av the battery we'll have down on us to-night, could drive his team no better than I mine, an' I hild the worser cattle! An' so I lived, an' so I was happy till afther that business wid Annie Bragin — she that turned me off as cool as a meat-safe, an' taught me where I stud in the mind av an honest woman. 'Twas no sweet dose to swallow.

"Afther that I sickened awhile an' tuk thought to my reg'mintal work; conceiting meself I wud

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study an' be a sargint, an' a major-gineral twinty minutes afther that. But on top av my ambitiousness there was an empty place in my sowl, an' me own opinion av mesilf cud not fill ut. Sez I to mesilf, 'Terence, you're a great man an' the best set-up in the reg'mint. Go on an' get promotion.' Sez mesilf to me, 'What for?' Sez I to mesilf, 'For the glory av ut!' Sez mesilf to me, 'Will that fill these two strong arrums av yours, Terence?' 'Go to the divil,' sez I to mesilf. 'Go to the married lines,' sez mesilf to me. ''Tis the same thing,' sez I to mesilf. 'Av you're the same man, ut is,' said mesilf to me; an' wid that I considered on ut a long while. Did you iver feel that way, Sorr?"

I snored gently, knowing that if Mulvaney were uninterrupted he would go on. The clamour from the bivouac fires beat up to the stars, as the rival singers of the companies were pitted against each other.

"So I felt that way, an' a bad time ut was. Wanst, bein' a fool, I wint into the married lines more for the sake av spakin' to our ould colour-sargint Shadd than for any thruck wid women-folk. I was a corp'ril then — rejuiced aftherwards, but a corp'ril then. I've got a photograff av mesilf to prove ut. 'You take a cup av tay wid us?' sez Shadd. 'I will that,' I sez, 'tho' tay is not my divarsion.'



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“‘’T’wud be better for you if ut were,’ sez ould Mother Shadd, an’ she had ought to know, for Shadd, in the ind av his service, dhrank bung-full each night.

“Wid that I tuk off my gloves — there was pipe-clay in thim, so that they stud alone — an’ pulled up my chair, lookin’ round at the china ornaments an’ bits av things in the Shadds’ quarters. They were things that belonged to a man, an’ no camp-kit, here to-day an’ dishipated next. ‘You’re comfortable in this place, sargint,’ sez I. ‘’Tis the wife that did ut, boy,’ sez he, pointin’ the stem av his pipe to ould Mother Shadd, an’ she smacked the top av his bald head upon the compliment. ‘That manes you want money,’ sez she.

“An’ thin — an’ thin whin the kettle was to be filled, Dinah came in — my Dinah — her sleeves rowled up to the elbow an’ her hair in a winkin’ glory over her forehead, the big blue eyes beneath twinklin’ like stars on a frosty night, an’ the tread av her two feet lighter than waste-paper from the colonel’s basket in ord’ly-room whin ut’s emptied. Bein’ but a shlip av a girl, she went pink at seein’ me, an’ I twisted me moustache an’ looked at a picture forninst the wall. Niver show a woman that ye care the snap av a finger for her, an’ begad she’ll come bleatin’ to your boot-heels!”

“I suppose that’s why you followed Annie



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Bragin till everybody in the married quarters laughed at you," said I, remembering that unhallowed wooing and casting off the disguise of drowsiness.

"I'm layin' down the gin'ral theory av the attack," said Mulvaney, driving his boot into the dying fire. "If you read the 'Soldier's Pocket Book,' which niver any soldier reads, you'll see that there are exceptions. Whin Dinah was out av the door (an' 'twas as tho' the sunlight had shut too) — 'Mother av Hiven, sargint,' sez I, 'but is that your daughter?' — 'I've believed that way these eighteen years,' sez ould Shadd, his eyes twinklin'; 'but Mrs. Shadd has her own opinion, like iv'ry woman.' — 'Tis wid yours this time, for a mericle,' sez Mother Shadd. 'Thin why in the name av fortune did I niver see her before?' sez I. 'Bekaze you've been thrapesin' round wid the married women these three years past. She was a bit av a child till last year, an' she shot up wid the spring,' sez ould Mother Shadd. 'I'll thrapese no more,' sez I. 'D'you mane that?' sez ould Mother Shadd, lookin' at me sideways like a hen looks at a hawk whin the chickens are runnin' free. 'Try me, an' tell,' sez I. Wid that I pulled on my gloves, dhrank off the tay, an' wint out av the house as stiff as at gin'ral p'rade, for well I knew that Dinah Shadd's eyes were in the small av my back out av the

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scullery window. Faith! that was the only time I mourned I was not a cav'lry man for the pride av the spurs to jingle.

"I wint out to think, an' I did a powerful lot av thinkin', but ut all came round to that shlip av a girl in the dotted blue dhress, wid the blue eyes an' the sparkil in them. Thin I kept off canteen, an' I kept to the married quarther's, or near by, on the chanst av meetin' Dinah. Did I meet her? Oh, my time past, did I not; wid a lump in my throat as big as my valise an' my heart goin' like a farrier's forge on a Saturday morning? 'Twas 'Good day to ye, Miss Dinah,' an' 'Good day t'you, corp'ril,' for a week or two, and divil a bit further could I get bekaze av the respect I had to that girl that I cud ha' broken betune finger an' thumb."

Here I giggled as I recalled the gigantic figure of Dinah Shadd when she handed me my shirt.

"Ye may laugh," grunted Mulvaney. "But I'm speakin' the trut', an' 'tis you that are in fault. Dinah was a girl that wud ha' taken the imperiousness out av the Duchess av Clonmel in those days. Flower hand, foot av shod air, an' the eyes av the livin' mornin' she had that is my wife to-day—ould Dinah, and niver aught else than Dinah Shadd to me.

"'Twas after three weeks standin' off an' on, an' niver makin' headway excipt through the eyes,

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that a little drummer-boy grinned in me face whin I had admonished him wid the buckle av my belt for riotin' all over the place. 'An' I'm not the only wan that doesn't kape to barricks,' sez he. I tuk him by the scruff av his neck,—my heart was hung on a hair-thrigger those days, you will onderstand,—an' 'Out wid ut,' sez I, 'or I'll lave no bone av you unbreakable.'—'Speak to Dempsey,' sez he, howlin'. 'Dempsey which?' sez I, 'ye unwashed limb av Satan.'—'Av the Bob-tailed Dhragoons,' sez he. 'He's seen her home from her aunt's house in the civil lines four times this fortnight.'—'Child!' sez I, dhroppin' him, 'your tongue's stronger than your body. Go to your quarters. I'm sorry I dhressed you down.'

"At that I went four ways to wanst huntin' Dempsey. I was mad to think that wid all my airs among women I shud ha' been chated by a basin-faced fool av a cav'lry-man not fit to trust on a trunk. Presintly I found him in our lines—the Bobtails was quartered next us—an' a tallowy, topheavy son av a she-mule he was, wid his big brass spurs an' his plastrons on his epigastons an' all. But he niver flinched a hair.

"'A word wid you, Dempsey,' sez I. 'You've walked wid Dinah Shadd four times this fortnight gone.'

"'What's that to you?' sez he. 'I'll walk

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forty times more, an' forty on top av that, ye shovel-futted clod-breakin' infantry lance-corp'ril.'

"Before I cud gyard he had his gloved fist home on my cheek, an' down I went full-sprawl. 'Will that content you?' sez he, blowin' on his knuckles for all the world like a Scots Greys orficer. 'Content!' sez I. 'For your own sake, man, take off your spurs, peel your jackut, an' onglove. 'Tis the beginnin' av the overture; stand up!'

"He stud all he know, but he niver peeled his jacket, an' his shoulders had no fair play. I was fightin' for Dinah Shadd an' that cut on my cheek. What hope had he forninst me? 'Stand up,' sez I, time an' again whin he was beginnin' to quarter the ground an' gyard high an' go large. 'This isn't ridin'-school,' I sez. 'O man, stand up an' let me get in at ye.' But whin I saw he wud be runnin' about, I grup his shtock in my left an' his waist-belt in my right an' swung him clear to my right front, head undher, he hammerin' my nose till the wind was knocked out av him on the bare ground. 'Stand up,' sez I, 'or I'll kick your head into your chest!' and I wud ha' done ut too, so ragin' mad I was.

"'My collar-bone's bruk,' sez he. 'Help me back to lines. I'll walk wid her no more.' So I helped him back."

"And was his collar-bone broken?" I asked,

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for I fancied that only Learoyd could neatly accomplish that terrible throw.

“He pitched on his left shoulder-point. Ut was. Next day the news was in both barricks, an’ whin I met Dinah Shadd wid a cheek on me like all the reg’mintal tailor’s samples there was no ‘Good mornin’, corp’ril,’ or aught else. ‘An’ what have I done, Miss Shadd,’ sez I, very bould, plantin’ mesilf forninst her, ‘that ye should not pass the time of day?’

“‘Ye’ve half-killed rough-rider Dempsey,’ sez she, her dear blue eyes fillin’ up.

“‘Maybe,’ sez I. ‘Was he a friend av yours that saw ye home four times in the fortnight?’

“‘Yes,’ sez she, but her mouth was down at the corners. ‘An’—an’ what’s that to you?’ she sez.

“‘Ask Dempsey,’ sez I, purtendin’ to go away.

“‘Did you fight for me then, ye silly man?’ she sez, tho’ she knew ut all along.

“‘Who else?’ sez I, an’ I tuk wan pace to the front.

“‘I wasn’t worth ut,’ sez she, fingerin’ in her apron.

“‘That’s for me to say,’ sez I. ‘Shall I say ut?’

“‘Yes,’ sez she in a saint’s whisper, an’ at that I explained mesilf; and she tould me what ivry man that is a man, an’ many that is a woman, hears wanst in his life.

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“‘But what made ye cry at startin’, Dinah darlin’?’ sez I.

“‘Your — your bloody cheek,’ sez she, duckin’ her little head down on my sash (I was on duty for the day) an’ whimperin’ like a sorrowful angil.

“Now a man cud take that two ways. I tuk ut as pleased me best an’ my first kiss wid ut. Mother av Innocence! but I kissed her on the tip av the nose an’ undher the eye; an’ a girl that lets a kiss come tumbleways like that has never been kissed before. Take note av that, Sorr. Thin we wint hand in hand to ould Mother Shadd like two little childher, an’ she said ’twas no bad thing, an’ ould Shadd nodded behind his pipe, an’ Dinah ran away to her own room. That day I throd on rollin’ clouds. All earth was too small to hould me. Begad, I cud ha’ hiked the sun out av the sky for a live coal to my pipe, so magnificent I was. But I tuk recruits at squad-drill instid, an’ began wid general battalion advance whin I shud ha’ been balance-steppin’ them. Eyah! that day! that day!”

A very long pause. “Well?” said I.

“’Twas all wrong,” said Mulvaney, with an enormous sigh. “An’ I know that ivry bit av ut was my own foolishness. That night I tuk maybe the half av three pints — not enough to turn the hair of a man in his natural senses. But I was more than half dhrunk wid pure joy, an’ that can-



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teen beer was so much whisky to me. I can't tell how it came about, but *bekaze* I had no thought for any wan except Dinah, *bekaze* I hadn't slipped her little white arms from my neck five minuts, *bekaze* the breath of her kiss was not gone from my mouth, I must go through the married lines on my way to quarters, an' I must stay talkin' to a red-headed Mullingar heifer av a girl, Judy Sheehy, that was daughter to Mother Sheehy, the wife of Nick Sheehy, the canteen-sargint — the Black Curse av Shielygh be on the whole brood that are above groun' this day!

“‘An' what are ye houldin' your head that high for, corp'ril?’ sez Judy. ‘Come in an' thry a cup av tay,’ she sez, standin' in the doorway. Bein' an ontrustable fool, an' thinkin' av anything but tay, I wint.

“‘Mother's at canteen,’ sez Judy, smoothin' the hair av hers that was like red snakes, an' lookin' at me cornerways out av her green cats' eyes. ‘Ye will not mind, corp'ril?’

“‘I can endure,’ sez I; ould Mother Sheehy bein' no divarsion av mine, nor her daughter too. Judy fetched the tea things an' put thim on the table, leanin' over me very close to get thim square. I dhrew back, thinkin' av Dinah.

“‘Is ut afraid you are av a girl alone?’ sez Judy.

“‘No,’ sez I. ‘Why should I be?’



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“ ‘That rests wid the girl,’ sez Judy, dhrawin’ her chair next to mine.

“ ‘Thin there let ut rest,’ sez I; an’ thinkin’ I’d been a trifle onpolite, I sez, ‘The tay’s not quite sweet enough for my taste. Put your little finger in the cup, Judy. ’Twill make ut necthar.’

“ ‘What’s necthar?’ sez she.

“ ‘Somethin’ very sweet,’ sez I; an’ for the sinful life av me I cud not help lookin’ at her out av the corner av my eye, as I was used to look at a woman.

“ ‘Go on wid ye, corp’ril,’ sez she. ‘You’re a flirrt.’

“ ‘On me sowl I’m not,’ sez I.

“ ‘Then you’re a cruel handsome man, an’ that’s worse,’ sez she, heaving big sighs an’ lookin’ cross-ways.

“ ‘You know your own mind,’ sez I.

“ ‘’Twud be better for me if I did not,’ she sez.

“ ‘There’s a dale to be said on both sides av that,’ sez I, unthinkin’.

“ ‘Say your own part av ut, then, Terence darlin’,’ sez she; ‘for begad I’m thinkin’ I’ve said too much or too little for an honest girl,’ an’ wid that she put her arms round my neck an’ kissed me.

“ ‘There’s no more to be said afther that,’ sez I, kissin’ her back again — Oh the mane scutt that I was, my head ringin’ wid Dinah Shadd! How does ut come about, Sorr, that whin a man has

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put the comether on wan woman, he's sure bound to put it on another? 'Tis the same thing at musketry. Wan day ivry shot goes wide or into the bank, an' the next, lay high lay low, sight or snap, ye can't get off the bull's-eye for ten shots runnin'."

"That only happens to a man who has had a good deal of experience. He does it without thinking," I replied.

"Thankin' you for the compliment, Sorr, ut may be so. But I'm doubtful whether you mint ut for a compliment. Hear now; I sat there wid Judy on my knee tellin' me all manner av nonsinse an' only sayin' 'yes' an' 'no,' when I'd much better ha' kept tongue betune teeth. An' that was not an hour afther I had left Dinah! What I was thinkin' av I cannot say. Presintly, quiet as a cat, ould Mother Sheehy came in velvet-dhrunk. She had her daughter's red hair, but 'twas bald in patches, an' I cud see in her wicked ould face, clear as lightnin', what Judy wud be twenty years to come. I was for jumpin' up, but Judy niver moved.

"'Terence has promust, mother,' sez she, an' the could sweat bruk out all over me. Ould Mother Sheehy sat down of a heap an' began playin' wid the cups. 'Thin you're a well-matched pair,' she sez very thick. 'For he's the biggest rogue that iver spoiled the Queen's shoe-leather, an'——'

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“‘I’m off, Judy,’ sez I. ‘Ye should not talk nonsense to your mother. Get her to bed, girl.’

“‘Nonsense!’ sez the ould woman, pricken’ up her ears like a cat an’ grippin’ the table-edge. ‘’Twill be the most nonsinsical nonsense for you, ye grinnin’ badger, if nonsense ’tis. Get clear, you. I’m goin’ to bed.’

“I ran out into the dhark, my head in a stew an’ my heart sick, but I had sinse enough to see that I’d brought ut all on mysilf. ‘It’s this to pass the time av day to a panjandhrum av hell-cats,’ sez I. ‘What I’ve said an’ what I’ve not said do not matther. Judy an’ her dam will hould me for a promust man, an’ Dinah will give me the go, an’ I deserve ut. I will go an’ get dhrunk,’ sez I, ‘an’ forget about ut, for ’tis plain I’m not a marrin’ man.’

“On my way to canteen I ran against Lascelles, colour-sergeant that was av E Comp’ny, a hard, hard man, wid a torment av a wife. ‘You’ve the head av a drowned man on your shoulders,’ sez he; ‘an’ you’re goin’ where you’ll get a worse wan. Come back,’ sez he. ‘Let me go,’ sez I. ‘I’ve thrown my luck over the wall wid my own hand!’—‘Thin that’s not the way to get ut back again,’ sez he. ‘Have out wid your throuble, ye fool-bhoy.’ An’ I tould him how the matther was.

“He sucked in his lower lip. ‘You’ve been

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thrapped,' sez he. 'Ju Sheehy wud be the better for a man's name to hers as soon as can. An' ye thought ye'd put the comether on her — that's the natural vanity of the baste. Terence, you're a big born fool, but you're not bad enough to marry into that comp'ny. If you said anythin', an' for all your protestations I'm sure ye did,— or did not, which is worse,— eat ut all — lie like the father of all lies, but come out av ut free av Judy. Do I not know what ut is to marry a woman that was the very spit an' image av Judy whin she was young? I'm gettin' old an' I've larnt patience, but you, Terence, you'd raise hand on Judy an' kill her in a year. Never mind if Dinah gives you the go, you've desarved ut; never mind if the whole reg'mint laughs you all day. Get shut av Judy an' her mother. They can't dhrag you to church, but if they do, they'll dhrag you to hell. Go back to your quarters and lie down', sez he. Thin over his shoulder, 'You *must* ha' done with thim.'

"Next day I wint to see Dinah, but there was no tucker in me as I walked. I knew the throuble wud come soon enough widout any handlin' av mine, an' I dreaded ut sore.

"I heard Judy callin' me, but I hild straight on to the Shadds' quarters, an' Dinah wud ha' kissed me, but I put her back.

"'Whin all's said, darlin',' sez I, 'you can give

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ut me if ye will, tho' I misdoubt 'twill be so easy to come by then.'

"I had scarce begun to put the explanation into shape before Judy an' her mother came to the door. I think there was a verandah, but I'm forgettin'.

"'Will ye not step in?' sez Dinah, pretty and polite, though the Shadds had no dealin's with the Sheehys. Old Mother Shadd looked up quick, an' she was the fust to see the throuble; for Dinah was her daughter.

"'I'm pressed for time to-day,' sez Judy as bould as brass; 'an' I've only come for Terence, —my promust man. 'Tis strange to find him here the day afther the day.'

"Dinah looked at me as though I had hit her, an' I answered straight.

"'There was some nonsinse last night at the Sheehys' quarthers, an' Judy's carryin' on the joke, darlin',' sez I.

"'At the Sheehys' quarthers?' sez Dinah very slow, an' Judy cut in wid: 'He was there from nine till ten, Dinah Shadd, an' the betther half av that time I was sittin' on his knee, Dinah Shadd. Ye may look and ye may look an' ye may look me up an' down, but ye won't look away that Terence is my promust man. Terence darlin', 'tis time for us to be comin' home.'

"Dinah Shadd niver said word to Judy. 'Ye

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left me at half-past eight,' she sez to me, 'an' I niver thought that ye'd leave me for Judy,—promises or no promises. Go back wid her, you that have to be fetched by a girl! I'm done with you,' sez she, and she ran into her own room, her mother followin'. So I was alone wid those two women and at liberty to spake my sentiments.

"'Judy Sheehy,' sez I, 'if you made a fool av me betune the lights you shall not do ut in the day. I niver promised you words or lines.'

"'You lie,' sez ould Mother Sheehy, 'an' may ut choke you where you stand!' She was far gone in dhrink.

"'An' tho' ut choked me where I stud I'd not change,' sez I. 'Go home, Judy. I take shame for a dacint girl like you dhraggin' your mother out bareheaded on this errand. Hear now, and have ut for an answer. I gave my word to Dinah Shadd yesterday, an', more blame to me, I was wid you last night talkin' nonsinse, but nothin' more. You've chosen to thry to hould me on ut. I will not be held thereby for anythin' in the world. Is that enough?'

"Judy wint pink all over. 'An' I wish you joy av the perjury,' sez she, duckin' a curtsey. 'You've lost a woman that would ha' wore her hand to the bone for your pleasure; an' 'deed, Terence, ye were not thrapped. . . .' Lascelles must ha' spoken plain to her. 'I am such as

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Dinah is — 'deed I am! Ye've lost a fool av a girl that'll niver look at you again, an' ye've lost what ye niver had — your common honesty. If you manage your men as you manage your love-makin', small wondher they call you the worst corp'ril in the comp'ny. Come away, mother,' sez she.

"But divil a fut would the ould woman budge! 'D'you hould by that?' sez she, peerin' up under her thick gray eyebrows.

"'Ay, an' wud,' sez I, 'tho' Dinah give me the go twinty times. I'll have no thruck with you or yours,' sez I. 'Take your child away, ye shameless woman.'

"'An' am I shameless?' sez she, bringin' her hands up above her head. 'Thin what are you, ye lyin', schamin', weak-kneed, dhirty-souled son av a sutler? Am I shameless? Who put the open shame on me an' my child that we shud go beggin' through the lines in the broad daylight for the broken word of a man? Double portion of my shame be on you, Terence Mulvaney, that think yourself so strong! By Mary and the saints, by blood and water, an' by ivry sorrow that came into the world since the beginnin', the black blight fall on you and yours, so that you may niver be free from pain for another when ut's not your own! May your heart bleed in your breast drop by drop, wid all your friends laughin' at the bleedin'! Strong



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you think yourself? May your strength be a curse to you to dhrive you into the divil's hands against your own will! Clear-eyed you are? May your eyes see clear ivry step av the dark path you take till the hot cindhers av hell put thim out! May the ragin' dry thirst in my own ould bones go to you, that you shall niver pass bottle full nor glass empty. God preserve the light av your onderstandin' to you, my jewel av a bhoy, that ye may niver forget what you mint to be an' do, whin you're wallowin' in the muck! May ye see the betther and follow the worse as long as there's breath in your body; an' may ye die quick in a strange land, watchin' your death before ut takes you, an' onable to stir hand or foot!

"I heard a scufflin' in the room behind, and thin Dinah Shadd's hand dhropped into mine like a rose-leaf into a muddy road.

"'The half av that I'll take,' sez she, 'an' more too if I can. Go home, ye silly talkin' woman — go home an' confess.'

"'Come away! Come away!' sez Judy, pullin' her mother by the shawl. "'Twas none av Terence's fault. For the love av Mary stop the talkin'!'

"'An' you!' said ould Mother Sheehy, spinnin' round forninst Dinah. 'Will ye take the half av that man's load? Stand off from him, Dinah Shadd. before he takes you down too — you that

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look to be a quarther-master-sergeant's wife in five years. You look too high, child. You shall *wash* for the quarther-master-sergeant, whin he plases to give you the job out av charity; but a privit's wife you shall be to the end, an' ivry sorrow of a privit's wife you shall know, and niver a joy but wan, that shall go from you like the running tide from a rock. The pain av bearin' you shall know but niver the pleasure av giving the breast; an' you shall put away a man-child into the common ground wid niver a priest to say a prayer over him, an' on that man-child ye shall think ivry day av your life. Think long, Dinah Shadd, for you'll niver have another, tho' you pray till your knees are bleedin'. The mothers av childher shall mock you behind your back when you're wringing over the wash-tub. You shall know what ut is to help a dhrunken husband home an' see him go to the gyard-room. Will that plase you, Dinah Shadd, that won't be seen talkin' to my daughter? You shall talk to worse than Judy before all's over. The sargints' wives shall look down on you contemptuous, daughter av a sargint, an' you shall cover ut all up wid a smiling face when your heart's burstin'. Stand off av him, Dinah Shadd, for I've put the Black Curse of Shielygh upon him, an' his own mouth shall make ut good.'

"She pitched forward on her head an' began

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foamin' at the mouth. Dinah Shadd ran out wid water, an' Judy dhragged the ould woman into the verandah till she sat up.

“‘I'm ould an' forlore,' she sez, thremblin' an' cryin', 'and 'tis like I say a dale more than I mane.'”

“‘Whin you're able to walk,—go,' says ould Mother Shadd. ‘This house has no place for the likes av you that have cursed my daughter.’”

“‘Eyah!’ said the ould woman. ‘Hard words break no bones, an' Dinah Shadd 'll kape the love av her husband till my bones are green corn. Judy darlin', I misremember what I came here for. Can you lend us the bottom av a tay-cup av tay, Mrs. Shadd?’”

“But Judy dhragged her off, cryin' as tho' her heart wud break. An' Dinah Shadd an' I, in ten minuts we had forgot ut all.”

“Then why do you remember it now?” said I.

“Is ut like I'd forget? Ivry word that wicked ould woman spoke fell throe in my life aftherwards, an' I cud ha' stud ut all—stud ut all—excipt when my little Shadd was born. That was on the line av march three months afther the regi-mint was taken with cholera. We were betune Umballa an' Kalka thin, an' I was on picket. Whin I came off duty the women showed me the child, an' ut turned on uts side an' died as I looked. We buried him by the road, an' Father

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Victor was a day's march behind wid the heavy baggage, so the comp'ny captain read a prayer. An' since then I've been a childless man, an' all else that ould Mother Sheehy put upon me an' Dinah Shadd. What do you think, Sorr ? ”

I thought a good deal, but it seemed better then to reach out for Mulvaney's hand. The demonstration nearly cost me the use of three fingers. Whatever he knows of his weaknesses, Mulvaney is entirely ignorant of his strength.

“But what do you think ? ” he repeated, as I was straightening out the crushed fingers.

My reply was drowned in yells and outcries from the next fire, where ten men were shouting for “Orth'ris,” “Privit Orth'ris,” “Mistah Or—ther—ris !” “Deah boy,” “Cap'n Orth'ris,” “Field-Marshal Orth'ris,” “Stanley, you pen'north o' pop, come 'ere to your own comp'ny !” And the cockney, who had been delighting another audience with recondite and Rabelaisian yarns, was shot down among his admirers by the major force.

“You've crumpled my dress-shirt 'orrid,” said he, “an' I sha'n't sing no more to this 'ere bloom-in' drawin'-room.”

Learoyd, roused by the confusion, uncoiled himself, crept behind Ortheris, and slung him aloft on his shoulders.

“Sing, ye bloomin' hummin' bird !” said he, and Ortheris, beating time on Learoyd's skull, de

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livered himself, in the raucous voice of the Ratcliffe Highway, of this song:—

My girl she give me the go onst,  
When I was a London lad,  
An' I went on the drink for a fortnight,  
And then I went to the bad.  
The Queen she give me a shillin'  
To fight for 'er over the seas;  
But Guv'ment built me a fever-trap,  
An' Injia give me disease.

### *Chorus.*

Ho! don't you 'eed what a girl says,  
An' don't you go for the beer;  
But I was an ass when I was at grass,  
An' that is why I'm 'ere.

I fired a shot at a Afghan,  
The beggar 'e fired again,  
An' I lay on my bed with a 'ole in my 'ed,  
An' missed the next campaign!  
I up with my gun at a Burman  
Who carried a bloomin' *dab*,  
But the cartridge stuck and the bay'nit bruk,  
An' all I got was the scar.

### *Chorus.*

Ho! don't you aim at a Afghan  
When you stand on the sky-line clear;  
An' don't you go for a Burman  
If none o' your friends is near.

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I served my time for a corp'ral,  
And wetted my stripes with pop,  
For I went on the bend with a intimate friend,  
An' finished the night in the "shop."  
I served my time for a sergeant;  
The colonel 'e sez "No!  
The most you'll see is a full C. B." <sup>1</sup>  
An' . . . very next night 'twas so.

### *Chorus.*

Ho! don't you go for a corp'ral  
Unless your 'ed is clear;  
But I was an ass when I was at grass,  
An' that is why I'm 'ere.

I've tasted the luck o' the army  
In barrack an' camp an' clink,  
An' I lost my tip through the bloomin' trip  
Along o' the women an' drink.  
I'm down at the heel o' my service,  
An' when I am laid on the shelf,  
My very wust friend from beginning to end  
By the blood of a mouse was myself!

### *Chorus.*

Ho! don't you 'eed what a girl says,  
An' don't you go for the beer;  
But I was an ass when I was at grass,  
An' that is why I'm 'ere.

"Ay, listen to our little man now, singin'  
an' shoutin' as tho' throuble had niver touched

<sup>1</sup> Confined to barracks.

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him. D' you remember when he went mad with the home-sickness?" said Mulvaney, recalling a never-to-be-forgotten season when Ortheris waded through the deep waters of affliction and behaved abominably. "But he's talkin' bitter truth, though. Eyah!

"My very worst frind from beginnin' to ind  
By the blood av a mouse was mesilf!"

. . . . .  
When I woke I saw Mulvaney, the night dew  
gemming his moustache, leaning on his rifle at  
picket, lonely as Prometheus on his rock, with I  
know not what vultures tearing his liver.



## THE GOD FROM THE MACHINE

Hit a man an' help a woman, an' ye can't be far wrong anyways.—*Maxims of Private Mulvaney.*

THE Inexpressibles gave a ball. They borrowed a seven-pounder from the Gunners, and wreathed it with laurels, and made the dancing-floor plate-glass, and provided a supper the like of which had never been eaten before, and set two sentries at the door of the room to hold the trays of programme-cards. My friend, Private Mulvaney, was one of the sentries, because he was the tallest man in the regiment. When the dance was fairly started the sentries were released, and Private Mulvaney went to curry favour with the Mess Sergeant in charge of the supper. Whether the Mess Sergeant gave or Mulvaney took, I cannot say. All that I am certain of is that, at supper-time, I found Mulvaney with Private Ortheris, two-thirds of a ham, a loaf of bread, half a *pâté-de-foie-gras*, and two magnums of champagne, sitting on the roof of my carriage. As I came up I heard him saying—

“Praise be a danst doesn't come as often as Ord'ly-room, or, by this an' that, Orth'ris, me son,

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I wud be the dishgrace av the rig'mint instid av the brightest jool in uts crown."

"*Hand* the Colonel's pet noosance," said Ortheris. "But wot makes you curse your rations? This 'ere fizzy stuff's good enough."

"Stuff, ye oncivilised pagin! 'Tis champagne we're dhrinkin' now. 'Tisn't that I am set ag'in. 'Tis this quare stuff wid the little bits av black leather in ut. I misdoubt I will be distressin'ly sick wid ut in the mornin'. Fwhat is ut?"

"Goose liver," I said, climbing on the top of the carriage, for I knew that it was better to sit out with Mulvaney than to dance many dances.

"Goose liver is ut?" said Mulvaney. "Faith, I'm thinkin' thim that makes it wud do betther to cut up the Colonel. He carries a power av liver undher his right arrum whin the days are warm an' the nights chill. He wud give thim tons an' tons av liver. 'Tis he sez so. 'I'm all liver to-day,' sez he; an' wid that he ordhers me ten days C. B. for as moild a dhrink as iver a good sodger tuk betune his teeth."

"That was when 'e wanted for to wash 'isself in the Fort Ditch," Ortheris explained. "Said there was too much beer in the Barrack water-butts for a God-fearing man. You was lucky in gettin' orf with wot you did, Mulvaney."

"Say you so? Now I'm pershuaded I was cruel hard trated, seein' fwhat I've done for the

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likes av him in the days whin my eyes were wider opin than they are now. Man alive, for the Colonel to whip *me* on the peg in that way! Me that have saved the repitation av a ten times better man than him! 'Twas ne-farious — an' that manes a power av evil!"

"Never mind the nefariousness," I said. "Whose reputation did you save?"

"More's the pity, 'twasn't my own, but I tuk more trouble wid ut than av ut was. 'Twas just my way, messin' wid fwhat was no business av mine. Hear now!" He settled himself at ease on the top of the carriage. "I'll tell you all about ut. Av coorse I will name no names, for there's wan that's an orf'cer's lady now, that was in ut, and no more will I name places, for a man is thracked by a place."

"Eyah!" said Ortheris lazily, "but this is a mixed story wot's comin'."

"Wanst upon a time, as the childher-books say, I was a recruity."

"Was you though?" said Ortheris; "now that's extrordinary!"

"Orth'ris," said Mulvaney, "av you opin thim lips av yours again, I will, savin' your presince, Sorr, take you by the slack av your trousers an' heave you."

"I'm mum," said Ortheris. "Wot 'appened when you was a recruity?"

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“I was a betther recruity than you iver was or will be, but that’s neither here nor there. Thin I became a man, an’ the divil av a man I was fifteen years ago. They called me Buck Mulvaney in thim days, an’, begad, I tuk a woman’s eye. I did that! Orth’ris, ye scrub, fwhat are ye sniggerin’ at? Do you misdoubt me?”

“Devil a doubt!” said Ortheris; “but I’ve ’eard summat like that before!”

Mulvaney dismissed the impertinence with a lofty wave of his hand, and continued —

“An’ the orf’cers av the rig’mint I was in in thim days *was* orf’cers — gran’ men, wid a manner on ’em, an’ a way wid ’em such as is not made these days — all but wan — wan o’ the capt’ns. A bad dhrill, a wake voice, an’ a limp leg — thim three things are the signs av a bad man. You bear that in your mind, Orth’ris, me son.

“An’ the Colonel av the rig’mint had a daughter — wan av thim lamblike, bleatin’, pick-me-up-an’-carry-me-or-I’ll-die gurls such as was made for the natural prey av men like the Capt’n, who was iverlastin’ payin’ coort to her, though the Colonel he said time an’ over, ‘Kape out av the brute’s way, my dear.’ But he niver had the heart for to send her away from the throuble, bein’ as he was a widower, an’ she their wan child.”

“Stop a minute, Mulvaney,” said I; “how in the world did you come to know these things?”

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“How did I come?” said Mulvaney, with a scornful grunt; “bekaze I’m turned durin’ the Quane’s pleasure to a lump av wood, lookin’ out straight forninst me, wid a — a — candelabrum in my hand, for you to pick your cards out av, must I not see nor feel? Av coorse I du! Up my back, an’ in my boots, an’ in the short hair av the neck — that’s where I kape my eyes whin I’m on duty an’ the reg’lar wans are fixed. Know! Take my word for it, Sorr, ivrything an’ a great dale more is known in a rig’mint; or fwat wud be the use av a Mess Sargint, or a Sargint’s wife doin’ wet-nurse to the Major’s baby? To reshume. He was a bad dhrill was this Capt’n — a rotten bad dhrill — an’ whin first I ran me eye over him, I sez to myself: ‘My Militia bantam!’ I sez, ‘my cock av a Gosport dunghill,’ — ’twas from Portsmouth he came to us, — ‘there’s combs to be cut,’ sez I, ‘an’ by the grace av God, ’tis Terence Mulvaney will cut them.’

“So he wint menowderin’, and minanderin’, an’ blandandherin’ roun’ an’ about the Colonel’s daughter, an’ she, poor innocint, lookin’ at him like a Comm’ssariat bullock looks at the Comp’ny cook. He’d a dhirty little scrub av a black moustache, an’ he twisted an’ turned ivry wurrd he used as av he found ut too sweet for to spit out. Eyah! He was a tricky man an’ a liar by natur’. Some are born so. He was wan. I knew he was

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over his belt in money borrowed from natives; besides a iot av other matthers which, in regard for your presence, Sorr, I will oblitherate. A little av fwhat I knew, the Colonel knew, for he wud have none av him, an' that, I'm thinkin', by fwhat happened aafterwards, the Capt'n knew.

“Wan day, bein' mortal idle, or they wud never ha' thried ut, the rig'mint gave amsure theatricals—orf'cers an' orf'cers' ladies. You've seen the likes time an' agin, Sorr, an' poor fun 'tis for thim that sit in the back row an' stamp wid their boots for the honour av the rig'mint. I was told off for to shif' the scenes, haulin' up this an' draggin' down that. Light work ut was, wid lashin's av beer and the gurl that dhressed the orf'cers' ladies—but she died in Aggra twelve years gone, an' my tongue's gettin' the betther av me. They was actin' a play thing called 'Sweethearts,' which you may ha' heard av, an' the Colonel's daughter she was a lady's maid. The Capt'n was a boy called Broom—Spread Broom was his name in the play. Thin I saw—ut come out in the actin'—fwhat I niver saw before, an' that was that he was no gentleman. They was too much together, thim two, a-whishperin' behind the scenes I shifted, an' some av what they said I heard; for I was death—blue death an' ivy—on the comb-cuttin'. He was iverlastin'ly oppressing her to fall in wid some sneakin' schame av his, an' she was thrym'



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to stand out against him, but not as though she was set in her will. I wonder now in thim days that my ears did not grow a yard on me head wid list'nin'. But I looked straight forninst me an' hauled up this an' dragged down that, such as was my duty, an' the orf'cers' ladies sez one to another, thinkin' I was out av listen-reach: 'Fwhat an obligin' young man is this Corp'ril Mulvaney!' I was a Corp'ril then. I was rejuced aftherwards, but, no matther, I was a Corp'ril wanst.

"Well, this 'Sweethearts' business wint on like most amshure theatricals, an' barrin' fwhat I suspicioned, 'twasn't till the dhress-rehearsal that I saw for certain that thim two—he the black-guard, an' she no wiser than she should ha' been—had put up an evasion."

"A what?" said I.

"E-vasion! Fwhat you call an elopemint. E-vasion I calls ut, bekaze, exceptin' whin 'tis right an' natural an' proper, 'tis wrong an' dhirty to steal a man's wan child, she not knowin' her own mind. There was a Sargint in the Comm'ssariat who set my face upon e-vasions. I'll tell you about that——"

"Stick to the bloomin' Captains, Mulvaney," said Ortheris; "Comm'ssariat Sargints is low."

Mulvaney accepted the amendment and went on:—

"Now I knew that the Colonel was no fool,



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any more than me, for I was hild the smartest man in the rig'mint, an' the Colonel was the best orf'cer commandin' in Asia; so fwhat he said an' I said was a mortal truth. We knew that the Capt'n was bad, but, for reasons which I have already oblitherated, I knew more than me Colonel. I wud ha' rolled out his face wid the butt av me gun before permittin' av him to steal the gurl. Saints knew av he wud ha' married her, and av he didn't she wud be in great tormint, an' the divil av a 'scandal.' But I niver sthruck, niver raised me hand on me shuperior orf'cer; an' that was a merricle now I come to considher it."

"Mulvaney, the dawn's risin'," said Ortheris, "an' we're no nearer 'ome than we was at the beginnin'. Lend me your pouch. Mine's all dust."

Mulvaney pitched his pouch over, and filled his pipe afresh.

"So the dhress-rehearsal came to an end, an', bekaze I was curious, I stayed behind whin the scene-shiftin' was ended, an' I shud ha' been in barracks, lyin' as flat as a toad under a painted cottage thing. They was talkin' in whispers, an' she was shiverin' an' gaspin' like a fresh-hukked fish. 'Are you sure you've got the hang av the manewers?' sez he, or wurds to that effec', as the coort-martial sez. 'Sure as death,' sez she, 'but I misdoubt 'tis cruel hard on my father.' 'Damn your father,' sez he, or anyways 'twas fwhat he thought,

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‘the arrangement is as clear as mud. Jungi will drive the carr’ge afther all’s over, an’ you come to the station, cool an’ aisy, in time for the two-o’clock thrain, where I’ll be wid your kit.’ ‘Faith,’ thinks I to myself, ‘thin there’s a *ayah* in the business tu!’

“A powerful bad thing is a *ayah*. Don’t you niver have any thruck wid wan. Then he began sootherin’ her, an’ all the orf’cers, and orf’cers’ ladies left, an’ they put out the lights. To explain the theory av the flight, as they say at Musk’thry, you must ondherstand that afther this ‘Sweet-hearts’ nonsinse was ended there was another little bit av a play called ‘Couples’—some kind av couple or another. The gurl was actin’ in this, but not the man. I suspicioned he’d go to the station wid the gurl’s kit at the end av the first piece. ’Twas the kit that flustered me, for I knew for a Capt’n to go trapesing about the impire wid the Lord knew what av a *truso* on his arrum was nefarious, an’ wud be worse than easin’ the flag, so far as the talk aftherwards wint.”

“’Old on, Mulvaney. Wot’s *truso*?” said Ortheris.

“You’re an oncivilised man, me son. Whin a gurl’s married, all her kit an’ ’coutrements are *truso*, which manes weddin’-portion. An’ ’tis the same whin she’s runnin’ away, even wid the biggest blackguard on the Army List.

“So I made my plan av campaign. The Col-

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onel's house was a good two miles away. 'Dennis,' sez I to my colour-sargint, 'av you love me lend me your kyart, for me heart is bruk an' me feet is sore wid trampin' to and from this foolishness at the Gaff.' An' Dennis lent ut, wid a rampin', stampin' red stallion in the shafts. Whin they was all settled down to their 'Sweethearts' for the first scene, which was a long wan, I slips outside and into the kyart. Mother av Hivin! but I made that horse walk, an' we came into the Colonel's compound as the divil wint through Athlone — in standin' le'ps. There was no one there excipt the servints, an I wint round to the back an' found the girl's *ayab*.

"'Ye black brazen Jezebel,' sez I, 'sellin' your masther's honour for five rupees — pack up all the Miss Sahib's kit an' look slippy! Capt'n Sahib's order,' sez I. 'Going to the station we are,' I sez, an' wid that I laid my finger to my nose an' looked the schamin' sinner I was.

"'Bote acchy,' says she, so I knew she was in the business, an' I piled up all the sweet talk I'd iver learnt in the bazars on to this she-bullock, an' prayed av her to put all the quick she knew into the thing. While she packed, I stud outside an' sweated, for I was wanted for to shif' the second scene. I tell you, a young gurl's e-vasion manes as much baggage as a rig'mint on the line av march! 'Saints help Dennis's springs,' thinks I, as I bun-

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dled the stuff into the thrap, 'for I'll have no mercy!'

"'I'm comin' too,' says the *ayah*.

"'No, you don't,' sez I, 'later — *pechy*! You *baito* where you are. I'll *pechy* come an' bring you *sart* along with me, you maraudin' — niver mind fwhat I called her.

"Thin I wint for the Gaff, an' by the special ordher av Providence, for I was doin' a good work you will ondherstand, Dennis's springs hild toight. 'Now, whin the Capt'n goes for that kit,' thinks I, 'he'll be throubled.' At the end av 'Sweethearts' off the Capt'n runs in his kyart to the Colonel's house, an' I sits down on the steps and laughs. Wanst an' again I slipped in to see how the little piece was goin', an' whin ut was near endin' I stepped out all among the carr'ges an' sings out very softly, 'Jungi!' Wid that a carr'ge began to move, an' I waved to the dhriver. '*Hitberao*!' sez I, an' he *bitberaoed* till I judged he was at proper distance, an' thin I tuk him, fair an' square betune the eyes, all I knew for good or bad, an' he dhropped wid a guggle like the canteen beer-engine whin ut's runnin' low. Thin I ran to the kyart an' tuk out all the kit an' piled it into the carr'ge, the sweat runnin' down my face in dhrops. 'Go home,' sez I to the *sais*; 'you'll find a man close here. Very sick he is. Take him away, an' av you iver say wan wurrd about fwhat you've

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*dekkloed*, I'll *marrow* you till your own wife won't *sumjao* who you are!' Thin I heard the stampin' av feet at the ind av the play, an' I ran in to let down the curtain. Whin they all came out the gurl thried to hide herself behind wan av the pillars, an' sez 'Jungi' in a voice that wouldn't ha' scared a hare. I run over to Jungi's carr'ge an' tuk up the lousy old horse-blanket on the box, wrapped my head an' the rest av me in ut, an' dhrove up to where she was.

" 'Miss Sahib,' sez I; 'goin' to the station? Capt'n Sahib's order!' an' widout a sign she jumped in all among her own kit.

" I laid to an' dhruv like steam to the Colonel's house before the Colonel was there, an' she screamed an' I thought she was goin' off. Out comes the *ayab*, sayin' all sorts av things about the Capt'n havin' come for the kit an' gone to the station.

" 'Take out the luggage, you divil,' sez I, 'or I'll murther you!'

" The lights av the people's thraps comin' from the Gaff was showin' across the parade-ground, an', by this an' that, the way thim two women worked at the bundles an' thrunks was a caution! I was dyin' to help, but, seein' I didn't want to be known, I sat wid the blanket roun' me an' coughed an' thanked the Saints there was no moon that night.

" Whin all was in the house again, I niver asked for *bukshish*, but dhruv tremenjus in the opp'site

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way from the other carr'ge an' put out my lights. Presintly, I saw a naygur man wallowin' in the road. I slipped down before I got to him, for I suspicioned Providence was wid me all through that night. 'Twas Jungi, his nose smashed in flat, all dumb sick as you plaze. Dennis's man must have tilted him out av the thrap. Whin he came to, 'Hutt!' sez I, but he began to howl.

"'You black lump av dhirt,' I sez, 'is this the way you dhrive your *gharri*? That *tikka* has been *owin'* an' *fere-owin'* all over the bloomin' counthry this whole bloomin' night, an' you as *mut-walla* as Davey's sow. Get up, you hog!' sez I, louder, for I heard the wheels av a thrap in the dark; 'get up an' light your lamps, or you'll be run into!' This was on the road to the Railway Station.

"'Fwhat the divil's this?' sez the Capt'n's voice in the dhark, an' I could judge he was in a lather av rage.

"' *Gharri* dhriver here, dhrunk, Sorr,' sez I; 'I've found his *gharri* sthrayin' about canton-mints, an' now I've found him.'

"'Oh!' sez the Capt'n; 'fwhat's his name?' I stooped down an' pretended to listen.

"'He sez his name's Jungi, Sorr,' sez I.

"'Hould my harse,' sez the Capt'n to his man, an' wid that he gets down wid the whip an' lays into Jungi, just mad with rage an' swearin' like the scutt he was.



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"I thought, afther a while, he wud kill the man, so I sez:—'Stop, Sorr, or you'll murder him!' That dhrew all his fire on me, an' he cursed me into blazes, an' out again. I stud to attenshin an' saluted:—'Sorr,' sez I, 'av ivry man in this wurruld had his rights, I'm thinkin' that more than wan would be beat'n to a jelly for this night's work—that niver came off at all, Sorr, as you see?' 'Now,' thinks I to myself, 'Terence Mulvaney, you've cut your own throat, for he'll sthrike, an' you'll knock him down for the good av his sowl an' your own iverlastin' dishgrace!'

"But the Capt'n niver said a single wurrd. He choked where he stud, an' thin he wint into his thrap widout sayin' good-night, an' I wint back to barracks.'

"And then?" said Ortheris and I together.

"That was all," said Mulvaney; "niver another word did I hear av the whole thing. All I know was that there was no e-vasion, an' that was fwhat I wanted. Now, I put ut to you, Sorr, is ten days' C. B. a fit an' a proper tratement for a man who has behaved as me?"

"Well, any'ow," said Ortheris, "'tweren't this 'ere Colonel's daughter, an' you *was* blazin' copped when you tried to wash in the Fort Ditch."

"That," said Mulvaney, finishing the champagne, "is a shuparfluous an' impert'nint observation."



## WITH THE MAIN GUARD

Der jungere Uhlanen  
Sit round mit open mouth  
While Breitmann tell dem stdories  
Of fightin' in the South;  
Und gif dem moral lessons,  
How before der battle pops,  
Take a little prayer to Himmel  
Und a goot long drink of Schnapps.

*Hans Breitmann's Ballads.*

“MARY, Mother av Mercy, fwat the divil possist us to take an' kape this melancolious counthry? Answer me that, Sorr.”

It was Mulvaney who was speaking. The time was one o'clock of a stifling June night, and the place was the main gate of Fort Amara, most desolate and least desirable of all fortresses in India. What I was doing there at that hour is a question which only concerns M'Grath the Sergeant of the Guard, and the men on the gate.

“Slape,” said Mulvaney, “is a shuparfluous necessity. This gyard'll shtay lively till relieved.” He himself was stripped to the waist; Learoyd on the next bedstead was dripping from the skinful

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of water which Ortheris, clad only in white trousers, had just sluiced over his shoulders; and a fourth private was muttering uneasily as he dozed open-mouthed in the glare of the great guard-lantern. The heat under the bricked archway was terrifying.

“The worrst night that iver I remimber. Eyah! Is all Hell loose this tide?” said Mulvaney. A puff of burning wind lashed through the wicket-gate like a wave of the sea, and Ortheris swore.

“Are ye more heasy, Jock?” he said to Leary. “Put yer ’ead between your legs. It’ll go orf in a minute.”

“Ah don’t care. Ah would not care, but ma heart is plaayin’ tivvy-tivvy on ma ribs. Let me die! Oh, leave me die!” groaned the huge Yorkshireman, who was feeling the heat acutely, being of fleshly build.

The sleeper under the lantern roused for a moment and raised himself on his elbow.—“Die and be damned then!” he said. “I’m damned and I can’t die!”

“Who’s that?” I whispered, for the voice was new to me.

“Gentleman born,” said Mulvaney; “Corp’ril wan year, Sargint nex’. Red-hot on his C’mmission, but dhrinks like a fish. He’ll be gone before the cowl’d weather’s here. So!”

He slipped his boot, and with the naked toe

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just touched the trigger of his Martini. Ortheris misunderstood the movement, and the next instant the Irishman's rifle was dashed aside, while Ortheris stood before him, his eyes blazing with reproof.

"You!" said Ortheris. "My Gawd, *you*! If it was you, wot would *we* do?"

"Kape quiet, little man," said Mulvaney, putting him aside, but very gently; "'tis not me, nor will ut be me whoile Dinah Shadd's here. I was but showin' something."

Learoyd, bowed on his bedstead, groaned, and the gentleman-ranker sighed in his sleep. Ortheris took Mulvaney's tendered pouch, and we three smoked gravely for a space while the dust-devils danced on the glacié and scoured the red-hot plain.

"Pop?" said Ortheris, wiping his forehead.

"Don't tantalise wid talkin' av dhrink, or I'll shtuff you into your own breech-block an'—fire you off!" grunted Mulvaney.

Ortheris chuckled, and from a niche in the verandah produced six bottles of gingerade.

"Where did ye get ut, ye Machiavel?" said Mulvaney. "'Tis no bazar pop."

"Ow do *Hi* know wot the Orf'cers drink?" answered Ortheris. "Arst the mess-man."

"Ye'll have a Disthict Coort-martial settin' on ye yet, me son," said Mulvaney, "but"—he opened a bottle—"I will not report ye this time.

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Fwhat's in the mess-kit is mint for the belly, as they say, 'specially whin that mate is dhrink. Here's luck! A bloody war or a — no, we've got the sickly season. War, thin!" — he waved the innocent "pop" to the four quarters of Heaven. "Bloody war! North, East, South, an' West! Jock, ye quakin' hayrick, come an' dhrink."

But Learoyd, half mad with the fear of death presaged in the swelling veins of his neck, was begging his Maker to strike him dead, and fighting for more air between his prayers. A second time Ortheris drenched the quivering body with water, and the giant revived.

"An' Ah divn't see thot a mon is i' fettle for gooin' on to live; an' Ah divn't see thot there is owt for t' livin' for. Hear now, lads! Ah'm tired — tired. There's nobbut watter i' ma bones. Let me die!"

The hollow of the arch gave back Learoyd's broken whisper in a bass boom. Mulvaney looked at me hopelessly, but I remembered how the madness of despair had once fallen upon Ortheris, that weary, weary afternoon on the banks of the Khemi River, and how it had been exorcised by the skilful magician Mulvaney.

"Talk, Terence!" I said, "or we shall have Learoyd slinging loose, and he'll be worse than Ortheris was. Talk! He'll answer to your voice."

Almost before Ortheris had deftly thrown all

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the rifles of the Guard on Mulvaney's bedstead, the Irishman's voice was uplifted as that of one in the middle of a story, and, turning to me, he said —

“In barricks or out of ut, as *you* say, Sorr, an Oirish rig'mint is the divil an' more. 'Tis only fit for a young man wid eddicated fisteses. Oh, the crame av disruption is an Oirish rig'mint, an' rippin', tearin', ragin' scattherers in the field av war! My first rig'mint was Oirish — Faynians an' rebils to the heart av their marrow was they, an' *so* they fought for the Widdy betther than most, bein' contrairy — Oirish. They was the Black Tyrone. You've heard av thim, Sorr?”

Heard of them! I knew the Black Tyrone for the choicest collection of unmitigated blackguards, dog-stealers, robbers of hen-roosts, assaulters of innocent citizens, and recklessly daring heroes in the Army List. Half Europe, and half Asia has had cause to know the Black Tyrone — good luck be with their tattered Colours as Glory has ever been!

“They *was* hot pickils an' ginger! I cut a man's head tu deep wid my belt in the days av my youth, an', afther some circumstances which I will obliterate, I came to the Ould Rig'mint, bearin' the character av a man wid hands an' feet. But, as I was goin' to tell you, I fell acrost the Black Tyrone agin wan day whin we wanted thim

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powerful bad. Orth'ris, me son, fwhat was the name av that place where they sint wan comp'ny av us an' wan av the Tyrone roun' a hill an' down again, all for to tache the Paythans something they'd niver learned before? Afther Ghuzni 'twas."

"Don't know what the bloomin' Paythans called it. We called it Silver's Theayter. You know that, sure!"

"Silver's Theatre—so 'twas. A gut betune two hills, as black as a bucket, an' as thin as a girl's waist. There was over-many Paythans for our convaynience in the gut, an' begad they called themselves a Reserve—bein' impident by natur'! Our Scotchies an' lashins av Gurkys was poundin' into some Paythan rig'mints, I think 'twas. Scotchies an' Gurkys are twins bekaze they're so onlike, an' they get dhrunk together whin God plazes. As I was sayin', they sint wan comp'ny av the Ould an' wan av the Tyrone to double up the hill an' clane out the Paythan Reserve. Orf'cers was scarce in thim days, fwhat with dysintry an' not takin' care av thimselves, an' we was sint out wid only wan orf'cer for the comp'ny; but he was a Man that had his feet beneath him, an' all his teeth in their sockuts."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"Captain O'Neil—Old Crook—Cruikna-bulleen—him that I tould ye that tale av whin he

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was in Burma. Hah! He was a Man.<sup>1</sup> The Tyrone tuk a little orf'cer bhoy, but divil a bit was he in command, as I'll dimonstrate presintly. We an' they came over the brow av the hill, wan on each side av the gut, an' there was that ondacint Reserve waitin' down below like rats in a pit.

“‘Howld on, men,’ sez Crook, who tuk a mother’s care av us always. ‘Rowl some rocks on thim by way av visitin’-kyards.’ We hadn’t rowled more than twinty bowlders, an’ the Paythans was beginnin’ to swear tremenjus, whin the little orf’cer bhoy av the Tyrone shqueaks out acrost the valley:—‘Fwhat the devil an’ all are you doin’, shpoilin’ the fun for my men? Do ye not see they’ll stand?’

“‘Faith, that’s a rare pluckt wan!’ sez Crook. ‘Niver mind the rocks, men. Come along down an’ take tay wid thim!’

“‘There’s damned little sugar in ut!’ sez my rear-rank man; but Crook heard.

“‘Have ye not all got spoons?’ he sez, laughin’, an’ down we wint as fast as we cud. Learoyd bein’ sick at the Base, he, av coorse, was not there.”

“‘Thot’s a lie!’ said Learoyd, dragging his

<sup>1</sup> Now first of the foemen of Boh Da Thone  
Was Captain C’Neil of the Black Tyrone.

*The Ballad of Bob Da Thone.*



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bedstead nearer. "Ah gotten *thot* theer, an' you know it, Mulvaaney." He threw up his arms, and from the right arm-pit ran, diagonally through the fell of his chest, a thin white line terminating near the fourth left rib.

"My mind's goin'," said Mulvaney, the unabashed. "Ye were there. Fwhat was I thinkin' of! 'Twas another man, av coorse. Well, you'll remimber thin, Jock, how we an' the Tyrone met wid a bang at the bottom an' got jammed past all movin' among the Paythans."

"Ow! It *was* a tight 'ole. I was squeezed till I thought I'd bloomin' well bust," said Ortheris, rubbing his stomach meditatively.

"'Twas no place for a little man, but *wan* little man' — Mulvaney put his hand on Ortheris's shoulder — "saved the life av me. There we shtuck, for divil a bit did the Paythans flinch, an' divil a bit dare we; our business bein' to clear 'em out. An' the most exthryordinar' thing av all was that we an' they just rushed into each other's arrums, an' there was no firing for a long time. Nothin' but knife an' bay'nit when we cud get our hands free: an' that was not often. We wus breast-on to thim, an' the Tyrone was yelpin' behind av us in a way I didn't see the lean av at first. But I knew later, an' so did the Paythans.

"'Knee to knee!' sings out Crook, wid a laugh, whin the rush av our comin' into the gut shtopped,

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an' he was huggin' a hairy great Paythan, neither bein' able to do anything to the other, tho' both was wishful.

“ ‘Breast to breast!’ he sez, as the Tyrone was pushin' us forward closer an' closer.

“ ‘An' hand over back!’ sez a Sargint that was behin'. I saw a sword lick out past Crook's ear, an' the Paythan was tuk in the apple av his throat like a pig at Dromeen fair.

“ ‘Thank ye, Brother Inner Guard,’ sez Crook, cool as a cucumber widout salt. ‘I wanted that room.’ An' he wint forward by the thickness av a man's body, havin' turned the Paythan undher him. The man bit the heel off Crook's boot in his death-bite.

“ ‘Push, men!’ sez Crook. ‘Push, ye paper-backed beggars!’ he sez. ‘Am I to pull ye through?’ So we pushed, an' we kicked, an' we swung, an' we swore, an' the grass bein' slippery, our heels wouldn't bite, an' God help the front-rank man that wint down that day!”

“ ‘Ave you ever bin in the Pit hentrance o' the Vic. on a thick night?’ interrupted Ortheris. “It was worse nor that, for they was goin' one way an' we wouldn't 'ave it. Leastaways, I 'adn't much to say.”

“Faith, me son, ye said ut, thin. I kep' the little man betune my knees as long as I cud, but he was 'pokin' roun' wid his bay'nit, blindin' an'

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stiffin' feroshus. The divil of a man is Orth'ris in a ruction — aren't ye?" said Mulvaney.

"Don't make game!" said the Cockney. "I knowed I wasn't no good then, but I guv 'em compot from the lef' flank when we opened out. No!" he said, bringing down his hand with a thump on the bedstead, "a bay'nit ain't no good to a little man — might as well 'ave a bloomin' fishin'-rod! I 'ate a clawin', maulin' mess, but gimme a breech that's wore out a bit, an' hamminition one year in store, to let the powder kiss the bullet, an' put me somewheres where I ain't trod on by 'ulkin swine like you, an' s'elp me Gawd, I could bowl you over five times outer seven at height 'undred. Would yer try, you lumberin' H Irishman."

"No, ye wasp. I've seen ye do ut. I say there's nothin' better than the bay'nit, wid a long reach, a double twist av ye can, an' a slow recover."

"Dom the bay'nit," said Learoyd, who had been listening intently. "Look a-here!" He picked up a rifle an inch below the foresight with an underhand action, and used it exactly as a man would use a dagger.

"Sitha," said he softly, "thot's better than owt, for a mon can bash t' faace wi' thot, an', if he divn't, he can breeak t' forearm o' t' gaard. 'Tis not i' t' books, though. Gie me t' butt."

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"Each does ut his own way, like makin' love," said Mulvaney quietly; "the butt or the bay'nit or the bullet accordin' to the natur' av the man. Well, as I was sayin', we shtuck there breathin' in, each other's faces and swearin' powerful; Orth'ris cursin' the mother that bore him bekaze he was not three inches taller.

"Prisintly he sez:—'Duck, ye lump, an' I can get at a man over your shouldher!'

"'You'll blow me head off,' I sez, throwin' my arm clear; 'go through under my arm-pit, ye bloodthirsty little scutt,' sez I, 'but don't shtick me or I'll wring your ears round.'

"Fwhat was ut ye gave the Paythan man for-ninst me, him that cut at me whin I cudn't move hand or foot? Hot or cowl'd was ut?"

"Cold," said Ortheris, "up an' under the rib-jint. 'E come down flat. Best for you 'e did."

"Thru'e, me son! This jam thing that I'm talkin' about lasted for five minuts good, an' thin we got our arms clear an' wint in. I misremimber exactly fwhat I did, but I didn't want Dinah to be a widdy at the Depôt. Thin, afther some promishkuous hackin' we shtuck again, an' the Tyrone behin' was callin' us dogs an' cowards an' all manner av names; we barrin' their way.

"'Fwhat ails the Tyrone?' thinks I; 'they've the makin's av a most convanient fight here.'

"A man behind me sez beseechful an' in a

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whisper:—‘Let me get at thim! For the love av Mary give me room beside ye, ye tall man!’

“‘An’ who are you that’s so anxious to be kilt?’ sez I, widout turnin’ my head, for the long knives was dancin’ in front like the sun on Donegal Bay whin ut’s rough.

“‘We’ve seen our dead,’ he sez, squeezin’ into me; ‘our dead that was men two days gone! An’ me that was his cousin by blood could not bring Tim Coulan off! Let me get on,’ he sez, ‘let me get to thim, or I’ll run ye through the back!’

“‘My troth,’ thinks I, ‘if the Tyrone have seen their dead, God help the Paythans this day!’ An’ thin I knew why the Oirish was ragin’ behind us as they was.

“I gave room to the man, an’ he ran forward wid the Haymakers’ Lift on his bay’nit an’ swung a Paythan clear off his feet by the belly-band av the brute, an’ the iron bruk at the lockin’-ring.

“‘Tim Coulan ’ll slape aisy to-night,’ sez he wid a grin; an’ the next minut his head was in two halves and he wint down grinnin’ by sections.

“The Tyrone was pushin’ an’ pushin’ in, an’ our men was swearin’ at thim, an’ Crook was workin’ away in front av us all, his sword-arm swingin’ like a pump-handle an’ his revolver spit-tin’ like a cat. But the strange thing av ut was the quiet that lay upon. ’Twas like a fight in a drame — except for thim that was dead.

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“Whin I gave room to the Oirishman I was expinded an’ forlorn in my inside. ’Tis a way I have, savin’ your prisince, Sorr, in action. ‘Let me out, bhoys,’ sez I, backin’ in among thim. ‘I’m goin’ to be onwell!’ Faith they gave me room at the wurrud, though they would not ha’ given room for all Hell wid the chill off. When I got clear, I was, savin’ your presince, Sorr, out-ragis sick bekaze I had dhrunk heavy that day.

“Well an’ far out av harm was a Sargint av the Tyrone sittin’ on the little orf’cer bhoy who had stopped Crook from rowlin’ the rocks. Oh, he was a beautiful bhoy, an’ the long black curses was slidin’ out av his innocint mouth like mornin’-jew from a rose!

“‘Fwhat have you got there?’ sez I to the Sargint.

“‘Wan av Her Majesty’s bantams wid his spurs up,’ sez he. ‘He’s goin’ to Coort-martial me.’

“‘Let me go!’ sez the little orf’cer bhoy. ‘Let me go and command my men!’ manin’ thereby the Black Tyrone, which was beyond any command — ay, even av they had made the Divil a Field-orf’cer.

“‘His father howlds my mother’s cow-feed in Clonmel,’ sez the man that was sittin’ on him. ‘Will I go back to *his* mother an’ tell her that I’ve let him throw himself away? Lie still, ye

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little pinch av dynamite, an' Coort-martial me aftherwards.'

"‘Good,’ sez I; ‘’tis the likes av him makes the likes av the Commandher-in-Chief, but we must presarve thim. Fwhat d’you want to do, Sorr?’ sez I, very politeful.

"‘Kill the beggars—kill the beggars!’ he shqueaks; his big blue eyes brimmin’ wid tears.

"‘An’ how’ll ye do that?’ sez I. ‘You’ve shquibbed off your revolver like a child wid a cracker; you can make no play wid that fine large sword av yours; an’ your hand’s shakin’ like an asp on a leaf. Lie still an’ grow,’ sez I.

"‘Get back to your comp’ny,’ sez he; ‘you’re insolint!’

"‘All in good time,’ sez I, ‘but I’ll have a dhrink first.’

"Just thin Crook comes up, blue an’ white all over where he wasn’t red.

"‘Wather!’ sez he; ‘I’m dead wid drouth! Oh, but it’s a gran’ day!’

"He dhrank half a skinful, and the rest he tilts into his chest, an’ it fair hissed on the hairy hide av him. He sees the little orf’cer bhoy undher the Sargint.

"‘Fwhat’s yonder?’ sez he.

"‘Mutiny, Sorr,’ sez the Sargint, an’ the orf’cer bhoy begins pleadin’ pitiful to Crook to be let go: but divil a bit wud Crook budge.



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“ ‘Kape him there,’ he sez, ‘ ’tis no child’s work this day. By the same token,’ sez he, ‘I’ll confishcate that iligant nickel-plated scent-sprinkler av yours, for my own has been vomitin’ dishgraceful!’

“ The fork av his hand was black wid the backspit av the machine. So he tuk the orf’cer bhoy’s revolver. Ye may look, Sorr, but, by my faith, *there’s a dale more done in the field than iver gets into Field Ordbers!*

“ ‘Come on, Mulvaney,’ sez Crook; ‘is this a Coort-martial?’ The two av us wint back together into the mess, an’ the Paythans were still standin’ up. They was not *too* impart’nint, though, for the Tyrone was callin’ wan to another to remimber Tim Coulan.

“ Crook stopped outside av the strife an’ looked anxious, his eyes rowlin’ roun’.

“ ‘Fwhat is ut, Sorr?’ sez I; ‘can I get ye anything?’

“ ‘Where’s a bugler?’ sez he.

“ I wint into the crowd — our men was dhrawin’ breath behin’ the Tyrone, who was fightin’ like sowls in tormint — an’ prisintly I came acrost little Frehan, our bugler bhoy, pokin’ roun’ among the best wid a rifle an’ bay’nit.

“ ‘Is amusin’ yoursilf fwhat you’re paid for, ye limb?’ sez I, catchin’ him by the scruff. ‘Come out av that an’ attind to your duty,’ I sez; but the bhoy was not pleased.

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“ ‘I’ve got wan,’ sez he, grinnin’, ‘big as you, Mulvaney, an’ fair half as ugly. Let me go get another.’

“ I was dishpleased at the personability av that remark, so I tucks him under my arm an’ carries him to Crook, who was watchin’ how the fight wint. Crook cuffs him till the bhoy cries, an’ thin sez nothin’ for a while.

“ The Paythans began to flicker onaisy, an’ our men roared. ‘Opin ordher! Double!’ sez Crook. ‘Blow, child, blow for the honour av the British Army!’

“ That bhoy blew like a typhoon, an’ the Tyrone an’ we opined out as the Paythans broke, an’ I saw that fwhat had gone before wud be kissin’ an’ huggin’ to fwhat was to come. We’d dhruv thim into a broad part av the gut whin they gave, an’ thin we opined out an’ fair danced down the valley, dhrovin’ thim before us. Oh, ’twas lovely, an’ stiddy, too! There was the Sargints on the flanks av what was left av us, kapin’ touch, an’ the fire was runnin’ from flank to flank, an’ the Paythans was dhroppin’. We opined out wid the widenin’ av the valley, an’ whin the valley narrowed we closed again like the shticks on a lady’s fan, an’ at the far ind av the gut where they thried to stand, we fair blew them off their feet, for we had expinded very little ammunition by reason av the knife work.”

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“Hi used thirty rounds goin’ down that valley,” said Ortheris, “an’ it was gentleman’s work. Might ’a’ done it in a white ’andkerchief an’ pink silk stockin’s, that part. Hi was on in that piece.”

“You could ha’ heard the Tyrone yellin’ a mile away,” said Mulvaney, “an’ ’twas all their Sargints cud do to get thim off. They was mad—mad—mad! Crook sits down in the quiet that fell whin we had gone down the valley, an’ covers his face wid his hands. Prisintly we all came back again accordin’ to our natures and disposishins, for they, mark you, show through the hide av a man in that hour.

“‘Bhoys! bhoys!’ sez Crook to himself. ‘I misdoubt we could ha’ engaged at long range an’ saved betther men than me.’ He looked at our dead an’ said no more.

“‘Captain dear,’ sez a man av the Tyrone, comin’ up wid his mouth bigger than iver his mother kissed ut, spittin’ blood like a whale; ‘Captain dear,’ sez he, ‘if wan or two in the shtalls have been discommoded, the gallery have enjoyed the performinces av a Roshus.’

“Thin I knew that man for the Dublin dock-rat he was—wan av the bhoys that made the lessee av Silver’s Theatre gray before his time wid tearin’ out the bowils av the benches an’ t’rowin’ thim into the pit. So I passed the wurrud that I knew when I was in the Tyrone an’ we lay in

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Dublin. ‘I don’t know who ’twas,’ I whispers, ‘an’ I don’t care, but anyways I’ll knock the face av you, Tim Kelly.’

“‘Eyah!’ sez the man, ‘was you there too? We’ll call ut Silver’s Theatre.’ Half the Tyrone, knowin’ the ould place, tuk ut up: so we called ut Silver’s Theatre.

“The little orf’cer bhoy av the Tyrone was thremblin’ an’ cryin’. He had no heart for the Coort-martials that he talked so big upon. ‘Ye’ll do well later,’ sez Crook, very quiet, ‘for not bein’ allowed to kill yourself for amusemint.’

“‘I’m a dishgraced man!’ sez the little orf’cer bhoy.

“‘Put me undher arrest, Sorr, if you will, but, by my sowi, I’d do ut again sooner than face your mother wid you dead,’ sez the Sargint that had sat on his head, standin’ to attention an’ salutin’. But the young wan only cried as tho’ his little heart was breakin’.

“Thin another man av the Tyrone came up, wid the fog av fightin’ on him.”

“The what, Mulvaney?”

“Fog av fightin’. You know, Sorr, that, like makin’ love, ut takes each man diff’rint. Now I can’t help bein’ powerful sick whin I’m in action. Orth’ris, here, niver stops swearin’ from ind to ind, an’ the only time that Learoyd opins his mouth to sing is whin he is messin’ wid other people’s heads:

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for he's a dhirty fighter is Jock. Recruities sometime cry, an' sometime they don't know fwhat they do, an' sometime they are all for cuttin' throats an' such like dhirtiness; but some men get heavy-dead-dhrunk on the fightin'. This man was. He was staggerin', an' his eyes were half shut, an' we cud hear him dhrav breath twinty yards away. He sees the little orf'cer bhoy, an' comes up, talkin' thick an' drowsy to himsilf. 'Blood the young whelp!' he sez; 'blood the young whelp'; an' wid that he threw up his arms, shpun roun', an' dropped at our feet, dead as a Paythan, an' there was niver sign or scratch on him. They said 'twas his heart was rotten, but oh, 'twas a quare thing to see!

"Thin we wint to bury our dead, for we wud not lave thim to the Paythans, an' in movin' among the haythen we nearly lost that little orf'cer bhoy. He was for givin' wan divil wather and layin' him aisy against a rock. 'Be careful, Sorr,' sez I; 'a wounded Paythan's worse than a live wan.' My troth, before the words was out of my mouth, the man on the ground fires at the orf'cer bhoy lanin' over him, an' I saw the helmit fly. I dropped the butt on the face av the man an' tuk his pistol. The little orf'cer bhoy turned very white, for the hair av half his head was singed away.

"'I tould you so, Sorr!' sez I; an', afther that, whin he wanted to help a Paythan I stud wid the

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muzzle contagious to the ear. They dare not do anythin' but curse. The Tyrone was growlin' like dogs over a bone that had been taken away too soon, for they had seen their dead an' they wanted to kill ivry sowl on the ground. Crook tould thim that he'd blow the hide off any man that misconducted himself; but, seeing that ut was the first time the Tyrone had iver seen their dead, I do not wondher they were on the sharp. 'Tis a shameful sight! Whin I first saw ut I wud niver ha' given quarter to any man north of the Khaibar — no, nor woman either, for the women used to come out afther dhark — Auggrh!

“Well, evenshually we buried our dead an' tuk away our wounded, an' come over the brow av the hills to see the Scotchies an' the Gurkys taking tay with the Paythans in bucketsfuls. We were a gang av dissolute ruffians, for the blood had caked the dust, an' the sweat had cut the cake, an' our bay'nits was hangin' like butchers' steels betune our legs, an' most av us were marked one way or another.

“A Staff Orf'cer man, clean as a new rifle, rides up an' sez: ‘What damned scarecrows are you?’

“‘A comp'ny av Her Majesty's Black Tyrone an' wan av the Ould Rig'mint,’ sez Crook very quiet, givin' our visitor the flure as 'twas.

“‘Oh!’ sez the Staff Orf'cer; ‘did you dislodge that Reserve?’



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“‘No!’ sez Crook, an’ the Tyrone laughed.

“‘Thin fwhat the divil have ye done?’

“‘Disthroyed ut,’ sez Crook, an’ he took us on, but not before Toomey that was in the Tyrone sez aloud, his voice somewhere in his stummick: ‘Fwhat in the name av misfortune does this parrit widout a tail mane by shtoppin’ the road av his betthers?’

“The Staff Orf’cer wint blue, an’ Toomey makes him pink by changin’ to the voice av a minow-derin’ woman an’ sayin’: ‘Come an’ kiss me, Major dear, for me husband’s at the wars an’ I’m all alone at the Depôt.’

“The Staff Orf’cer wint away, an’ I cud see Crook’s shoulthurs shakin’.

“His Corp’ril checks Toomey. ‘Lave me alone,’ sez Toomey, widout a wink. ‘I was his bâtman before he was married, an’ he knows fwhat I mane, av you don’t. There’s nothin’ like livin’ in the hoight av society.’ D’you remimber that, Orth’ris?”

“Hi do. Toomey ’e died in ’orspital, next week it was, ’cause I bought ’arf his kit; an’ I remember after that ——”

“GUARRD, TURN OUT!”

The Relief had come; it was four o’clock. “I’ll catch a kyart for you, Sorr,” said Mulvaney, diving hastily into his accoutrements. “Come up to the top av the Fort an’ we’ll pershue our invistigations



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into M'Grath's shtable." The relieved Guard strolled round the main bastion on its way to the swimming-bath, and Learoyd grew almost talkative. Ortheris looked into the Fort Ditch and across the plain. "Ho! it's weary waitin' for Ma-ary!" he hummed; "but I'd like to kill some more bloomin' Paythans before my time's up. War! Bloody war! North, East, South, and West."

"Amen!" said Learoyd slowly.

"Fwhat's here?" said Mulvaney, checking at a blur of white by the foot of the old sentry-box. He stooped and touched it. "It's Norah—Norah M'Taggart! Why, Nonie darlin', fwhat are ye doin' out av your mother's bed at this time?"

The two-year-old child of Sergeant M'Taggart must have wandered for a breath of cool air to the very verge of the parapet of the Fort Ditch. Her tiny night-shift was gathered into a wisp round her neck and she moaned in her sleep. "See there!" said Mulvaney; "poor lamb! Look at the heat-rash on the innocent skin av her. 'Tis hard—crool hard even for us. Fwhat must it be for these? Wake up, Nonie, your mother will be woild about you. Begad, the child might ha' fallen into the ditch!"

He picked her up in the growing light, and set her on his shoulder, and her fair curls touched the grizzled stubble of his temples. Ortheris and Lea-

## SOLDIERS THREE

royd followed snapping their fingers, while Norah smiled at them a sleepy smile. Then carolled Mulvaney, clear as a lark, dancing the baby on his arm —

“ If any young man should marry you,  
Say nothin’ about the joke;  
That iver ye slep’ in a sinthry-box,  
Wrapped up in a soldier’s cloak.

“ Though, on me sowl, Nonie,” he said gravely, “ there was not much cloak about you. Niver mind, you won’t dhress like this ten years to come. Kiss your friends an’ run along to your mother.”

Nonie, set down close to the Married Quarters, nodded with the quiet obedience of the soldier’s child, but, ere she pattered off over the flagged path, held up her lips to be kissed by the Three Musketeers. Ortheris wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and swore sentimentally; Lea-royd turned pink; and the two walked away together. The Yorkshireman lifted up his voice and gave in thunder the chorus of “ The Sentry-Box,” while Ortheris piped at his side.

“ ‘Bin to a bloomin’ sing-song, you two ? ” said the Artilleryman, who was taking his cartridge down to the Morning Gun. “ You’re over-merry for these dashed days.”

“ I bid ye take care o’ the brat, said he,  
For it comes of a noble race,”

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Learoyd bellowed. The voices died out in the swimming-bath.

“Oh, Terence!” I said, dropping into Mulvaney’s speech, when we were alone, “it’s you that have the Tongue!”

He looked at me wearily; his eyes were sunk in his head, and his face was drawn and white “Eyah!” said he; “I’ve blandandhered thim through the night somehow, but can thim that helps others help themselves? Answer me that, Sorr!”

And over the bastions of Fort Amara broke the pitiless day.

## BLACK JACK

To the wake av Tim O'Hara  
Came company,  
All St. Patrick's Alley  
Was there to see.

*Robert Buchanan.*

As the Three Musketeers share their silver, tobacco, and liquor together, as they protect each other in barracks or camp, and as they rejoice together over the joy of one, so do they divide their sorrows. When Ortheris's irrepressible tongue has brought him into cells for a season, or Learoyd has run amok through his kit and accoutrements, or Mulvaney has indulged in strong waters, and under their influence reproved his Commanding Officer, you can see the trouble in the faces of the untouched two. And the rest of the regiment know that comment or jest is unsafe. Generally the three avoid Orderly Room and the Corner Shop that follows, leaving both to the young bloods who have not sown their wild oats; but there are occasions —

For instance, Ortheris was sitting on the drawbridge of the main gate of Fort Amara, with his

## BLACK JACK

hands in his pockets and his pipe, bowl down, in his mouth. Learoyd was lying at full length on the turf of the glacis, kicking his heels in the air, and I came round the corner and asked for Mulvaney.

Ortheris spat into the ditch and shook his head. "No good seein' 'im now," said Ortheris; "'e's a bloomin' camel. Listen."

I heard on the flags of the verandah opposite to the cells, which are close to the Guard-Room, a measured step that I could have identified in the tramp of an army. There were twenty paces *crescendo*, a pause, and then twenty *diminuendo*.

"That's 'im," said Ortheris; "my Gawd, that's 'im! All for a bloomin' button you could see your face in an' a bit o' lip that a bloomin' Hark-angel would 'a' guv back."

Mulvaney was doing pack-drill—was compelled, that is to say, to walk up and down for certain hours in full marching order, with rifle, bayonet, ammunition, knapsack, and overcoat. And his offence was being dirty on parade! I nearly fell into the Fort Ditch with astonishment and wrath, for Mulvaney is the smartest man that ever mounted guard, and would as soon think of turning out uncleanly as of dispensing with his trousers.

"Who was the Sergeant that checked him?" I asked.

## SOLDIERS THREE

"Mullins, o' course," said Ortheris. "There ain't no other man would whip 'im on the peg so. But Mullins ain't a man. 'E's a dirty little pig-scraper, that's wot 'e is."

"What did Mulvaney say? He's not the make of man to take that quietly."

"Said! Bin better for 'im if 'e'd shut 'is mouth. Lord, 'ow we laughed! 'Sargint,' 'e sez, 'ye say I'm dirty. Well,' sez 'e, 'when your wife lets you blow your own nose for yourself, perhaps you'll know wot dirt is. You're himperfectly eddicated, Sargint,' sez 'e, an' then we fell in. But after p'rade 'e was up an' Mullins was swear-in' 'imself black in the face at Ord'ly Room that Mulvaney 'ad called 'im a swine an' Lord knows wot all. You know Mullins. 'E'll 'ave 'is 'ead broke in one o' these days. 'E's too big a bloom-in' liar for ord'nary consumption. 'Three hours' can an' kit,' sez the Colonel; 'not for bein' dirty on p'rade, but for 'avin' said somethin' to Mullins, tho' I do not believe,' sez 'e, 'you said wot 'e said you said.' An' Mulvaney fell away sayin' nothin'. You know 'e never speaks to the Colonel for fear o' gettin' 'imself fresh copped."

Mullins, a very young and very much married Sergeant, whose manners were partly the result of innate depravity and partly of imperfectly digested Board School, came over the bridge, and most rudely asked Ortheris what he was doing.

## BLACK JACK

“Me?” said Ortheris. “Ow! I’m waiting for my C’mmission. ’Seed it comin’ along yit?”

Mullins turned purple and passed on. There was the sound of a gentle chuckle from the glaxis where Learoyd lay.

“’E expects to get ’is C’mmission some day,” explained Orth’ris; “Gawd ’elp the Mess that ’ave to put their ’ands into the same kiddy as ’im! Wot time d’you make it, Sir? Fower! Mulvaney ’ll be out in ’arf an hour. You don’t want to buy a dorg, Sir, do you? A pup you can trust — ’arf Rampore by the Colonel’s grey’ound.”

“Ortheris,” I answered sternly, for I knew what was in his mind, “do you mean to say that ——”

“I didn’t mean to arx money o’ you, any’ow,” said Ortheris; “I’d ’a’ sold you the dorg good an’ cheap, but — but — I know Mulvaney ’ll want somethin’ after we’ve walked ’im orf, an’ I ain’t got nothin’, nor ’e ’asn’t neither. I’d sooner sell you the dorg, Sir. ’S trewth I would!”

A shadow fell on the drawbridge, and Ortheris began to rise into the air, lifted by a huge hand upon his collar.

“Onything but t’ braass,” said Learoyd, quietly, as he held the Londoner over the ditch. “Onything but t’ braass, Orth’ris, ma son! Ah’ve got one rupee eight annas of ma own.” He showed two coins, and replaced Ortheris on the drawbridge rail.



## SOLDIERS THREE

“Very good,” I said; “where are you going to?”

“Goin’ to walk ’im orf w’en he comes out — two miles or three or fower,” said Ortheris.

The footsteps within ceased. I heard the dull thud of a knapsack falling on a bedstead, followed by the rattle of arms. Ten minutes later, Mulvaney, faultlessly dressed, his lips tight and his face as black as a thunderstorm, stalked into the sunshine on the drawbridge. Learoyd and Ortheris sprang from my side and closed in upon him, both leaning towards as horses lean upon the pole. In an instant they had disappeared down the sunken road to the cantonments, and I was left alone. Mulvaney had not seen fit to recognise me; so I knew that his trouble must be heavy upon him.

I climbed one of the bastions and watched the figures of the Three Musketeers grow smaller and smaller across the plain. They were walking as fast as they could put foot to the ground, and their heads were bowed. They fetched a great compass round the parade-ground, skirted the Cavalry lines, and vanished in the belt of trees that fringes the low land by the river.

I followed slowly, and sighted them — dusty, sweating, but still keeping up their long, swinging tramp — on the river bank. They crashed through the Forest Reserve, headed towards the Bridge of Boats, and presently established themselves on the bow of one of the pontoons. I rode cautiously

## BLACK JACK

till I saw three puffs of white smoke rise and die out in the clear evening air, and knew that peace had come again. At the bridge-head they waved me forward with gestures of welcome.

"Tie up your 'orse," shouted Ortheris, "an' come on, Sir. We're all goin' 'ome in this 'ere bloomin' boat."

From the bridge-head to the Forest Officer's bungalow is but a step. The mess-man was there, and would see that a man held my horse. Did the Sahib require aught else — a peg, or beer? Ritchie Sahib had left half a dozen bottles of the latter, but since the Sahib was a friend of Ritchie Sahib, and he, the mess-man, was a poor man —

I gave my order quietly, and returned to the bridge. Mulvaney had taken off his boots, and was dabbling his toes in the water; Learoyd was lying on his back on the pontoon; and Ortheris was pretending to row with a big bamboo.

"I'm an ould fool," said Mulvaney, reflectively, "dhraggin' you two out here bekaze I was undher the Black Dog — sulkin' like a child. Me that was soldierin' when Mullins, an' be damned to him, was shquealin' on a counterpin for five shillin' a week — an' that not paid! Bhoys, I've took you five miles out av natural pervarsity. Phew!"

"Wot's the odds so long as you're 'appy?" said Ortheris, applying himself afresh to the bamboo. "As well 'ere as anywhere else."

## SOLDIERS THREE

Learoyd held up a rupee and an eight-anna bit, and shook his head sorrowfully. "Five mile from t' Canteen, all along o' Mulvaaney's blaasted pride."

"I know ut," said Mulvaney penitently. "Why will ye come wid me? An' yet I wud be mortal sorry if ye did not — any time — though I am ould enough to know betther. But I will do penance. I will take a dhrink av wather."

Ortheris squeaked shrilly. The butler of the Forest bungalow was standing near the railings with a basket, uncertain how to clamber down to the pontoon. "Might 'a' know'd you'd 'a' got liquor out o' bloomin' desert, Sir," said Ortheris, gracefully, to me. Then to the mess-man: "Easy with them there bottles. They're worth their weight in gold. Jock, ye long-armed beggar, get out o' that an' hike 'em down."

Learoyd had the basket on the pontoon in an instant, and the Three Musketeers gathered round it with dry lips. They drank my health in due and ancient form, and thereafter tobacco tasted sweeter than ever. They absorbed all the beer, and disposed themselves in picturesque attitudes to admire the setting sun — no man speaking for a while.

Mulvaney's head dropped upon his chest, and we thought that he was asleep.

"What on earth did you come so far for?" I whispered to Ortheris.

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“To walk ’im orf, o’ course. When ’e’s been checked we allus walks ’im orf. ’E ain’t fit to be spoke to those times—nor ’e ain’t fit to leave alone neither. So we takes ’im till ’e is.”

Mulvaney raised his head, and stared straight into the sunset. “I had my rifle,” said he dreamily, “an’ I had my bay’nit, an’ Mullins came round the corner, an’ he looked in my face an’ grinned dishpiteful. ‘*You* can’t blow your own nose,’ sez he. Now, I cannot tell fwhat Mullins’s expayrience may ha’ been, but, Mother av God, he was nearer to his death that minut’ than I have iver been to mine—and that’s less than the thicknuss av a hair!”

“Yes,” said Ortheris calmly, “you’d look fine with all your buttons took orf, an’ the Band in front o’ you, walkin’ roun’ slow time. We’re both front-rank men, me an’ Jock, when the rig’ment’s in ’ollow square. Bloomin’ fine you’d look. ‘The Lord giveth an’ the Lord taketh awai,—Heasy with that there drop!—Blessed be the naime o’ the Lord,’” he gulped in a quaint and suggestive fashion.

“Mullins! Wot’s Mullins?” said Learoyd slowly. “Ah’d take a coomp’ny o’ Mullinses—ma hand behind me. Sitha, Mulvaaney, don’t be a fool.”

“*You* were not checked for fwhat you did not do, an’ made a mock av afther. ’Twas for less

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than that the Tyrone wud ha' sent O'Hara to hell, instid av lettin' him go by his own choosin', whin Rafferty shot him," retorted Mulvaney.

"And who stopped the Tyrone from doing it?" I asked.

"That ould fool who's sorry he didn't shtick the pig Mullins." His head dropped again. When he raised it he shivered and put his hands on the shoulders of his two companions.

"Ye've walked the divil out av me, bhoys," said he.

Ortheris shot out the red-hot dottle of his pipe on the back of the hairy fist. "They say 'Ell's 'otter than that," said he, as Mulvaney swore aloud. "You be warned so. Look yonder!"—he pointed across the river to a ruined temple—"Me an' you an' *im*"—he indicated me by a jerk of his head—"was there one day when Hi made a bloomin' show o' myself. You an' 'im stopped me doin' such—an Hi was on'y wishful for to desert. You are makin' a bigger bloomin' show o' yourself now."

"Don't mind him, Mulvaney," I said; "Dinah Shadd won't let you hang yourself yet awhile, and you don't intend to try it either. Let's hear about the Tyrone and O'Hara. Rafferty shot him for fooling with his wife. What happened before that?"

"There's no fool like an ould fool. You know you can do anythin' wid me whin I'm talkin'. Did

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I say I wud like to cut Mullins's liver out? I deny the imputashin, for fear that Orth'ris here wud report me — Ah! You wud tip me into the river, wud you? Sit quiet, little man. Anyways, Mullins is not worth the throuble av an extry p'rade, an' I will trate him wid outrajis contimpt. The Tyrone an' O'Hara! O'Hara an' the Tyrone, begad! Ould days are hard to bring back into the mouth, but they're always inside the head."

Followed a long pause.

"O'Hara was a divil. Though I saved him, for the honour av the rig'mint, from his death that time, I say it now. He was a divil — a long bould, black-haired divil."

"Which way?" asked Ortheris.

"Women."

"Then I know another."

"Not more than in r'ason, if you mane me, ye warped walkin'-shtick. I have been young, an' for why should I not have tuk what I cud? Did I iver, whin I was Corp'ril, use the rise av my rank — wan step an' that taken away, more's the sorrow an' the fault av me! — to prosecute a nefarious intrigue, as O'Hara did? Did I, whin I was Corp'ril, lay my spite upon a man an' make his life a dog's life from day to day? Did I lie, as O'Hara lied, till the young wans in the Tyrone turned white wid the fear av the Judgment av God killin' thim all in a lump, as ut killed the



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woman at Devizes? I did not! I have sinned my sins an' I have made my confessin, an' Father Victor knows the worst av me. O'Hara was tuk, before he cud spake, on Rafferty's doorstep, an' no man knows the worst av him. But this much I know!

"The Tyrone was recruited any fashion in the ould days. A draf' from Connemara—a draf' from Portsmouth—a draf' from Kerry, an' that was a blazin' bad draf'—here, there and iverywhere—but the large av thim was Oirish—Black Oirish. Now there are Oirish an' Oirish. The good are good as the best, but the bad are wurst than the wurst. 'Tis this way. They clog together in pieces as fast as thieves, an' no wan knows fwhat they will do till wan turns informer an' the gang is bruk. But ut begins again, a day later, meetin' in holes an' corners an' swearin' bloody oaths an' shtickin' a man in the back an' runnin' away, an' thin waitin' for the blood-money on the reward papers—to see if ut's worth enough. Those are the Black Oirish, an' 'tis they that bring dishgrace upon the name av Oireland, an' thim I wud kill—as I nearly kilied wan wanst.

"But to reshume. My room—'twas before I was married—was wid twelve av the scum av the earth—the pickin's av the gutter—mane men that wud neither laugh nor talk nor yet get dhrunk as a man shud. They thried some av



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their dog's thricks on me, but I dhrew a line round my cot, an' the man that thransgressed ut wint into hospital for three days good.

“O'Hara had put his spite on the room—he was my Colour-Sargint—an' nothin' cud we do to plaze him. I was younger than I am now, an' I tuk what I got in the way av dressin'-dhown and punishmint-dhrill wid my tongue in my cheek. But it was diff'rint wid the others, an' why I cannot say, excipt that some men are borrun mane an' go to dhirty murdher where a fist is more than enough. After a whoile they changed their chune to me an' was desp'rit frien'ly—all twelve av thim cursin' O'Hara in chorus.

“‘Eyah,’ sez I, ‘O'Hara's a divil, an' I'm not for denyin' ut, but is he the only man in the wurruld? Let him go. He'll get tired av findin' our kit foul an' our 'coutrements onproperly kep'.

“‘We will *not* let him go,’ sez they.

“‘Thin take him,’ sez I, ‘an' a dashed poor yield you will get for your throuble.’

“‘Is he not misconductin' himself wid Slimmy's wife?’ sez another.

“‘She's common to the rig'mint,’ sez I. ‘Fwhat has made ye this partic'lar on a suddint?’

“‘Has he not put his spite on the roomful av us? Can we do anythin' that he will not check us for?’ sez another.

“‘That's thrue,’ sez I.

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“‘Will ye not help us to do aught,’ sez another — ‘a big bould man like you?’

“‘I will break his head upon his shoulthers av he puts hand on me,’ sez I. ‘I will give him the lie av he says that I’m dhirty, an’ I wud not mind duckin’ him in the Artillery troughs if ut was not that I’m thryin’ for my shtripes.’

“‘Is that all ye will do?’ sez another. ‘Have ye no more spunk than that, ye blood-dhrawn calf?’

“‘Blood-dhrawn I may be,’ sez I, gettin’ back to my cot an’ makin’ my line round ut; ‘but ye know that the man who comes acrost this mark will be more blood-dhrawn than me. No man gives me the name in my mouth,’ I sez. ‘Ondherstand, I will have no part wid you in anythin’ ye do, nor will I raise my fist to my shuparior. Is any wan comin’ on?’ sez I.

“‘They made no move, tho’ I gave them full time, but stud growlin’ an’ snarlin’ together at wan ind av the room. I tuk up my cap and wint out to Canteen, thinkin’ no little av mesilf, and there I grew most ondacintly dhrunk in my legs. My head was all reasonable.

“‘Houligan,’ I sez to a man in E Comp’ny that was by way av bein’ a frind av mine; ‘I’m overtuk from the belt down. Do you give me the touch av your shoulther to presarve my formation an’ march me acrost the ground into the high grass.

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I'll sleep ut off there,' sez I; an' Houligan — he's dead now, but good he was while he lasted — walked wid me, givin' me the touch whin I wint wide, ontill we came to the high grass, an', my faith, the sky an' the earth was fair rowlin' undher me. I made for where the grass was the thickust, an' there I slep' off my liquor wid an easy conscience. I did not desire to come on books too frequent; my charachter havin' been shpotless for the good half av a year.

“Whin I roused, the dhrink was dyin' out in me, an' I felt as though a she-cat had littered in my mouth. I had not learned to hould my liquor wid comfort in thim days. 'Tis little betther I am now. 'I will get Houligan to pour a bucket over my head,' thinks I, an' I wud ha' risen, but I heard some wan say: 'Mulvaney can take the blame av ut for the backslidin' hound he is.'

“‘Oho!’ sez I, an' my head rang like a guard-room gong: ‘fwhat is the blame that this young man must take to oblige Tim Vulmea?’ For 'twas Tim Vulmea that shpoke.

“I turned on my belly an' crawled through the grass, a bit at a time, to where the spache came from. There was the twelve av my room sittin' down in a little patch, the dhry grass wavin' above their heads an' the sin av black murder in their hearts. I put the stuff aside to get a clear view.

“‘Fwhat's that?’ sez wan man, jumpin' up.

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“‘A dog,’ says Vulmea. ‘You’re a nice hand to this job! As I said, Mulvaney will take the blame—av ut comes to a pinch.’

“‘’Tis harrd to swear a man’s life away,’ sez a young wan.

“‘Thank ye for that,’ thinks I. ‘Now, fwat the divil are you paragins conthrivin’ against me?’

“‘’Tis as aisy as dhrinkin’ your quart,’ sez Vulmea. ‘At seven or thereon, O’Hara will come acrost to the Married Quarters, goin’ to call on Slimmy’s wife, the swine! Wan av us’ll pass the wurd to the room, an’ we shtart the divil an’ all av a shine—laughin’ an’ crackin’ on an’ t’rowin’ our boots about. Thin O’Hara will come to give us the ordher to be quiet, the more by token bekaze the room lamp will be knocked over in the larkin’. He will take the straight road to the ind door where there’s the lamp in the verandah, an’ that’ll bring him clear against the light as he shtands. He will not be able to look into the dhark. Wan av us will loose off, an’ a close shot ut will be, an’ shame to the man that misses. ’Twill be Mulvaney’s rifle, she that is at the head av the rack—there’s nc mistakin’ that long-shtocked, cross-eyed bitch even in the dhark.’

“The thief misnamed my ould firin’-piece out av jealousy—I was pershuaded av that—an’ ut made me more angry than all.

“But Vulmea goes on: ‘O’Hara will dhrop,

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an' by the time the light's lit again, there'll be some six av us on the chest av Mulvaney, cryin' murdher an' rape. Mulvaney's cot is near the ind door, an' the shmokin' rifle will be lyin' under him whin we've knocked him over. We know, an' all the rig'mint knows, that Mulvaney has given O'Hara more lip than any man av us. Will there be any doubt at the Coort-Martial? Wud twelve honust sodger-bhoys swear away the life av a dear, quiet, swate-timpered man such as is Mulvaney—wid his line av pipe-clay roun' his cot, threatenin' us wid murdher av we overshteped ut, as we can truthful testify?'

“‘Mary, Mother av Mercy!’ thinks I to mesilf; ‘ut is this to have an unruly mimber an’ fistes fit to use! Oh the sneakin’ hounds!’

“The big dhrops ran down my face, for I was wake wid the liquor an’ had not the full av my wits about me. I laid shtill an’ heard thim workin’ themselves up to swear my life by tellin’ tales av ivry time I had put my mark on wan or another; an’, my faith, they was few that was not so dishtinguished. ’Twas all in the way av fair fight, though, for niver did I raise my hand excipt whin they had provoked me to ut.

“‘’Tis all well,’ sez wan av thim, ‘but who’s to do this shootin’?’

“‘Fwhat matther?’ sez Vulmea. ‘’Tis Mulvaney will do that — at the Coort-Martial.’

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“ ‘He will so,’ sez the man, ‘but whose hand is put to the thrigger — *in the room?*’

“ ‘Who’ll do ut?’ sez Vulmea, lookin’ round, but divil a man answered. They began to dish-pute till Kiss, that was always playin’ Shpoil Five, sez: ‘Thry the kyards!’ Wid that he opined his tunic an’ tuk out the greasy palammers, an’ they all fell in wid the notion.

“ ‘Deal on!’ sez Vulmea, wid a big rattlin’ oath, ‘an’ the Black Curse av Shielygh come to the man that will not do his duty as the kyards say. Amin!’

“ ‘Black Jack is the masther,’ sez Kiss, dealin’. Black Jack, Sorr, I shud expaytiate to you, is the Ace av Shpades, which from time immimorial has has been intimately connect’ wid battle, murder an’ suddin death.

“ *Wanst* Kiss dealt, an’ there was no sign, but the men was whoite wid the workin’s av their sowls. *Twice* Kiss dealt, an’ there was a gray shine on their cheeks like the mess av an egg. *Three* times Kiss dealt, an’ they was bine. ‘Have ye not lost him?’ sez Vulmea, wipin’ the sweat on him; ‘Let’s ha’ done quick!’ ‘Quick ut is,’ sez Kiss t’rowin’ him the kyard; an’ ut fell face up on his knee — Black Jack!

“ Thin they all cackled wid laughin’. ‘Duty thrippence,’ sez wan av thim, ‘an’ damned cheap at that price!’ But I cud see they all dhrew a little away from Vulmea an’ lef’ him sittin’ playin’



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wid the kyard. Vulmea sez no word for a whoile, but licked his lips — cat-ways. Thin he threw up his head an' made the men swear by ivry oath known to stand by him not alone in the room, but at the Coort-Martial that was to set on *me*! He tould off five av the biggest to stretch me on my cot whin the shot was fired, an' another man he tould off to put out the light, an' yet another to load my rifle. He wud not do that himself; an' that was quare, for 'twas but a little thing considherin'.

“Thin they swore over again that they wud not bethray wan another, an' crep' out av the grass in diff'rint ways, two by two. A mercy ut was that they did not come on me. I was sick wid fear in the pit av my stummick — sick, sick, sick! Afther they was all gone, I wint back to Canteen an' called for a quart to put a thought in me. Vulmea was there, dhrinkin' heavy, an' politeful to me beyond reason. ‘Fwhat will I do — fwhat will I do?’ thinks I to meself whin Vulmea wint away.

“Presintly the Arm'rer Sargint comes in stiffin' an' crackin' on, not pleased wid any wan, bekaze the Martini-Henry bein' new to the rig'mint in those days we used to play the mischief wid her arrangemints. 'Twas a long time before I cud get out av the way av thryin' to pull back the back-sight an' turnin' her over afther firin'—as if she was a Snider.

“‘Fwhat tailor-men do they give me to work



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wid?' sez the Arm'rer Sargint. 'Here's Hogan, his nose flat as a table, laid by for a week, an' ivry Comp'ny sendin' their arrums in knocked to small shivreens.'

"'Fwhat's wrong wid Hogan, Sargint?' sez I.

"'Wrong!' sez the Arm'rer Sargint; 'I showed him, as though I had been his mother, the way av shtrippin' a 'Tini, an' he shtrup her clane an' aisy. I tould him to put her to again an' fire a blank into the blow-pit to show how the dhirt hung on the groovin'. He did that, but he did not put in the pin av the fallin'-block, an' av coorse whin he fired he was strook by the block jumpin' clear. Well for him 'twas but a blank—a full charge wud ha' cut his oi out.'

"I looked a thrifle wiser than a boiled sheep's head. 'How's that, Sargint?' sez I.

"'This way, ye blundherin' man, an' don't you be doin' ut,' sez he. Wid that he shows me a Waster action—the breech av her all cut away to show the inside—an' so plazed he was to grumble that he dimonstrated fwhat Hogan had done twice over. 'An' that comes av not knowin' the wepping you're purvided wid,' sez he.

"'Thank ye, Sargint,' sez I; 'I will come to you again for further information.'

"'Ye will not,' sez he. 'Kape your clanin'-rod away from the breech-pin, or you will get into trouble.'

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“I wint outside, an’ I could ha’ danced wid delight for the grandeur av ut. ‘They will load my rifle, good luck to thim, whoile I’m away,’ thinks I, and back I wint to the Canteen to give thim their clear chanst.

“The Canteen was fillin’ wid men at the ind av the day. I made feign to be far gone in dhrink, an’, wan by wan, all my roomful came in wid Vulmea. I wint away, walkin’ thick an’ heavy, but not so thick an’ heavy that any wan cud ha’ tuk me. Sure and thrue, there was a kyartridge gone from my pouch an’ lyin’ snug in my rifle. I was hot wid rage against thim all, an’ I worried the bullet out wid my teeth as fast as I cud, the room bein’ empty. Then I tuk my boot an’ the clanin’-rod and knocked out the pin av the fallin’-block. Oh, ’twas music when that pin rowled on the flure! I put ut into my pouch an’ sthuck a dab av dirt on the holes in the plate, puttin’ the fallin’-block back. ‘That’ll do your business, Vulmea,’ sez I, lyin’ easy on the cot. ‘Come an’ sit on my chest the whole room av you, an’ I will take you to my bosom for the biggest divils that iver chated halter.’ I wud have no mercy on Vulmea. His oi or his life — little I cared.

“At dusk they came back, the twelve av thim, an’ they had all been dhrinkin’. I was shammin’ sleep on the cot. Wan man wint outside in the verandah. Whin he whishtled they began to rage

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roun' the room an' carry on tremenjús. But I niver want to hear men laugh as they did — sky-larkin' too! 'Twas like mad jackals.

“‘Shtop that blasted noise!’ sez O'Hara in the dark, an' pop goes the room lamp. I cud hear O'Hara runnin' up, an' the rattlin' av my rifle in the rack, an' the men breathin' heavy as they stud roun' my cot. I cud see O'Hara in the light av the verandah lamp, an' thin I heard the crack av my rifle. She cried loud, poor darlint, bein' mis-handled. Next minut' five men were houldin' me down. ‘Go aisy,’ I sez; ‘fwhat's ut all about?’

“Thin Vulmea, on the flure, raised a howl you cud hear from wan ind av cantonmints to the other. ‘I'm dead, I'm butchered, I'm blind!’ sez he. ‘Saints have mercy on my sinful sowl! Sind for Father Constant! Oh sind for Father Constant an' let me go clean!’ By that I knew he was not so dead as I could 'ha' wished.

“O'Hara picks up the lamp in the verandah wid a hand as stiddy as a rest. ‘Fwhat damned dog's thrick is this av yours?’ sez he, and turns the light on Tim Vulmea that was shwimmin' in blood from top to toe. The fallin'-block had sprung free behin' a full charge av powther — good care I tuk to bite down the brass afther takin' out the bullet, that there might be somethin' to give ut full worth — an' had cut Tim from the lip to the corner av the right eye, lavin' the eyelid in tatters, an' so

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up an' along by the forehead to the hair. 'Twas more av a rakin' plough, if you will ondherstand, than a clane cut; an' niver did I see a man bleed as Vulmea did. The dhrink an' the stew that he was in pumped the blood strong. The minut' the men sittin' on my chest heard O'Hara spakin' they scattered, each wan to his cot, an' cried out very politeful: 'Fwhat is ut, Sargint?'

"'Fwhat is ut!' sez O'Hara, shakin' Tim. 'Well an' good do you know fwhat ut is, ye skulkin' ditch-lurkin' dogs! Get a *doolie*, an' take this whimperin' scutt away. There will be more heard av ut than any av you will care for.'

"Vulmea sat up rockin' his head in his hand an' moanin' for Father Constant.

"'Be done!' sez O'Hara, dhraggin' him up by the hair. 'You're none so dead that you cannot go fifteen years for thryin' to shoot me.'

"'I did not,' sez Vulmea; 'I was shootin' mesilf.'

"'That's quare,' sez O'Hara, 'for the front av my jackut is black wid your powther.' He tuk up the rifle that was still warm, an' began to laugh. 'I'll make your life Hell to you,' sez he, 'for attempted murdher an' kapin' your rifle onproperly. You'll be hanged first an' thin put undher stop-pages for four fifteen. The rifle's done for,' sez he.

"'Why, 'tis my rifle!' sez I, comin' up to

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look; 'Vulmea, ye divil, fwhat were you doin' wid her — answer me that?'

"'Lave me alone,' sez Vulmea; 'I'm dyin'!'

"'I'll wait till you're betther,' sez I, 'an' thin we two will talk ut out umbrageous.'

"O'Hara pitched Tim into the *doolie*, none too tinder, but all the bhoys kep' by their cots, which was not the sign av innocent men. I was huntin' ivrywhere for my fallin'-block, but not findin' ut at all. I niver found ut.

"'Now fwhat will I do?' sez O'Hara, swinging the verandah light in his hand an' lookin' down the room. I had hate and contimpt av O'Hara, an' I have now, dead tho' he is, but, for all that, will I say he was a brave man. He is baskin' in Purgathory this tide, but I wish he cud hear that, whin he stud lookin' down the room an' the bhoys shivered before the oi av him, I knew him for a brave man, an' I liked him *so*.

"'Fwhat will I do?' sez O'Hara agin, an' we heard the voice av a woman low an' sof' in the verandah. 'Twas Slimmy's wife, come over at the shot, sittin' on wan av the benches an' scarce able to walk.

"'O Denny! — Denny, dear,' sez she, 'have they kilt you?'

"O'Hara looked down the room again an' showed his teeth to the gum. Then he spat on the flure.

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“‘You’re not worth ut,’ sez he. ‘Light that lamp, ye dogs,’ an’ wid that he turned away, an’ I saw him walkin’ off wid Slimmy’s wife; she thryin’ to wipe off the powther-black on the front av his jackut wid her handkerchief. ‘A brave man you are,’ thinks I—‘a brave man an’ a bad woman.’

“No wan said a word for a time. They was all ashamed past spache.

“‘Fwhat d’you think he will do?’ sez wan av thim at last. ‘He knows we’re all in ut.’

“‘Are we so?’ sez I from my cot. ‘The man that sez that to me will be hurt. I do not know,’ sez I, ‘fwhat onderhand divilmint you have contrived, but by what I’ve seen I know that you cannot commit murdher wid another man’s rifle—such shakin’ cowards you are. I’m goin’ to slape,’ I sez, ‘an’ you can blow my head off whoile I lay.’ I did not slape, though, for a long time. Can ye wonder?

“Next morn the news was through all the rig’-mint, an’ there was nothin’ that the men did not tell. O’Hara reports, fair an’ easy, that Vulmea was come to grief through tamperin’ wid his rifle in barricks, all for to show the mechanism. An’ by my sowl, he had the impart’nince to say that he was on the shpot at the time an’ cud certify that ut was an accidint! You might ha’ knocked my roomful down wid a straw whin they heard



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that. 'Twas lucky for thim that the bhoys were always thryin' to find out how the new rifle was made, an' a lot av thim had come up for easin' the pull by shtickin' bits av grass an' such in the part av the lock that showed near the thrigger. The first issues of the 'Tinis was not covered in, an' I mesilf have eased the pull av mine time an' agin. A light pull is ten points on the range to me.

" 'I will not have this foolishness!' sez the Colonel. 'I will twist the tail off Vulmea!' sez he; but whin he saw him, all tied up an' groanin' in hospital, he changed his will. 'Make him an early convalescent,' sez he to the Doctor, an' Vulmea was made so for a warnin'. His big bloody bandages an' face puckered up to wan side did more to kape the bhoys from messin' wid the insides av their rifles than any punishmint.

" O'Hara gave no reason for fwhat he'd said, an' all my roomful were too glad to inquire, tho' he put his spite upon thim more wearin' than before. Wan day, howiver, he tuk me apart very polite, for he cud be that at the choosin'.

" 'You're a good sodger, tho' you're a damned insolint man,' sez he.

" 'Fair words, Sargint,' sez I, 'or I may be insolint again.'

" ' 'Tis not like you,' sez he, 'to lave your rifle in the rack widout the breech-pin, for widout the breech-pin she was whin Vulmea fired. I should



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ha' found the break av ut in the eyes av the holes, else,' he sez.

“ ‘Sargint,’ sez I, ‘fwhat wud your life ha’ been worth av the breech-pin had been in place — for, on my sowl, my life wud be worth just as much to me av I tould you whether ut was or was not. Be thankful the bullet was not there,’ I sez.

“ ‘That’s thrue,’ sez he, pulling his moustache; ‘but I do not believe that you, for all your lip, was in that business.’

“ ‘Sargint,’ sez I, ‘I cud hammer the life out av a man in ten minuts wid my fistes if that man dish-pleased me; for I am a good sodger, an’ I will be threatad as such, an’ whoile my fistes are my own they’re strong enough for all work I have to do. They do not fly back towards me!’ sez I, lookin’ him betune the eyes.

“ ‘You’re a good man,’ sez he, lookin’ me betune the eyes — an’ oh he was a gran’-built man to see! — ‘you’re a good man,’ he sez, ‘an’ I cud wish, for the pure frolic av ut, that I wus not a Sargint, or that you were not a Privit; an’ you will think me no coward whin I say this thing.’

“ ‘I do not,’ sez I. ‘I saw you whin Vulmea mishandled the rifle. But, Sargint,’ I sez, ‘take the wurrd from me now, spakin’ as man to man wid the shtripes off, tho’ ’tis little right I have to talk, me bein’ fwhat I am by natur’. This time ye tuk no harm, an’ next time ye may not, but, in

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the ind, so sure as Slimmy's wife came into the verandah, so sure will ye take harm — an' bad harm. Have thought, Sargint,' sez I. 'Is ut worth ut?'

"'Ye're a bould man,' sez he, breathin' harrd. 'A very bould man. But I am a bould man tu. Do you go your way, Privit Mulvaney, an' I will go mine.'

"We had no further spache thin or afther, but, wan by another, he drafted the twelve av my room out into other rooms an' got thim spread among the Comp'nies, for they was not a good breed to live together, an' the Comp'ny orf'cers saw ut. They wud ha' shot me in the night av they had known fwhat I knew; but that they did not.

"An', in the ind, as I said, O'Hara met his death from Rafferty for foolin' wid his wife. He wint his own way too well — Eyah, too well! Shtraight to that affair, widout turnin' to the right or to the lef', he wint, an' may the Lord have mercy on his sowl. Amin!"

"'Ear! 'Ear!" said Ortheris, pointing the moral with a wave of his pipe. "An' this is 'im 'oo would be a bloomin' Vulmea all for the sake of Mullins an' a bloomin' button! Mullins never went after a woman in his life. Mrs. Mullins, she saw 'im one day ——"

"Ortheris," I said, hastily, for the romances of Private Ortheris are all too daring for publication, "look at the sun. It's a quarter past six!"

## BLACK JACK

“O Lord! Three quarters of an hour for five an’ a ’arf miles! We’ll ’ave to run like Jimmy O.”

The Three Musketeers clambered on to the bridge, and departed hastily in the direction of the cantonment road. When I overtook them I offered them two stirrups and a tail, which they accepted enthusiastically. Ortheris held the tail, and in this manner we trotted steadily through the shadows by an unfrequented road.

At the turn into the cantonments we heard carriage wheels. It was the Colonel’s barouche, and in it sat the Colonel’s wife and daughter. I caught a suppressed chuckle, and my beast sprang forward with a lighter step.

The Three Musketeers had vanished into the night.

## ON GREENHOW HILL

To Love's low voice she lent a careless ear ;  
Her hand within his rosy fingers lay,  
A chilling weight. She would not turn or hear ;  
But with averted face went on her way.  
But when pale Death, all featureless and grim,  
Lifted his bony hand, and beckoning  
Held out his cypress-wreath, she followed him,  
And Love was left forlorn and wondering,  
That she who for his bidding would not stay,  
At Death's first whisper rose and went away.

*Rivals.*

“*Obé, Ahmed Din ! Shafiz Ullah aboo !* Bahadur Khan, where are you ? Come out of the tents, as I have done, and fight against the English. Don't kill your own kin ! Come out to me !”

The deserter from a native corps was crawling round the outskirts of the camp, firing at intervals, and shouting invitations to his old comrades. Misled by the rain and the darkness, he came to the English wing of the camp, and with his yelping and rifle-practice disturbed the men. They had been making roads all day, and were tired.

Ortheris was sleeping at Learoyd's feet. “Wot's all that ?” he said thickly. Learoyd snored, and

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a Snider bullet ripped its way through the tent wall. The men swore. "It's that bloomin' deserter from the Aurangabadis," said Ortheris. "Git up, some one, an' tell 'im 'e's come to the wrong shop."

"Go to sleep, little man," said Mulvaney, who was steaming nearest the door. "I can't arise an' expaytiate with him. 'Tis rainin' entrenchin' tools outside."

"'Tain't because you bloomin' can't. It's 'cause you bloomin' won't, ye long, limp, lousy, lazy beggar, you. 'Ark to 'im 'owlin'!"

"Wot's the good of argifyin' ? Put a bullet into the swine ! 'E's keepin' us awake !" said another voice.

A subaltern shouted angrily, and a dripping sentry whined from the darkness —

"'Tain't no good, sir. I can't see 'im. 'E's 'idin' somewhere down 'ill."

Ortheris tumbled out of his blanket. "Shall I try to get 'im, sir ?" said he.

"No," was the answer. "Lie down. I won't have the whole camp shooting all round the clock. Tell him to go and pot his friends."

Ortheris considered for a moment. Then, putting his head under the tent wall, he called, as a 'bus conductor calls in a block, "'Igher up, there ! 'Igher up !"

The men laughed, and the laughter was carried

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down wind to the deserter, who, hearing that he had made a mistake, went off to worry his own regiment half a mile away. He was received with shots; the Aurangabadis were very angry with him for disgracing their colours.

"An' that's all right," said Ortheris, withdrawing his head as he heard the hiccough of the Sniders in the distance. "S'elp me Gawd, tho', that man's not fit to live — messin' with my beauty-sleep this way."

"Go out and shoot him in the morning, then," said the subaltern incautiously. "Silence in the tents now. Get your rest, men."

Ortheris lay down with a happy little sigh, and in two minutes there was no sound except the rain on the canvas and the all-embracing and elemental snoring of Learoyd.

The camp lay on a bare ridge of the Himalayas, and for a week had been waiting for a flying column to make connection. The nightly rounds of the deserter and his friends had become a nuisance.

In the morning the men dried themselves in hot sunshine and cleaned their grimy accoutrements. The native regiment was to take its turn of road-making that day while the Old Regiment loafed.

"I'm goin' to lay for a shot at that man," said Ortheris, when he had finished washing out his

## ON GREENHOW HILL

rifle. "'E comes up the watercourse every evenin' about five o'clock. If we go and lie out on the north 'ill a bit this afternoon we'll get 'im."

"You're a bloodthirsty little mosquito," said Mulvaney, blowing blue clouds into the air. "But I suppose I will have to come wid you. Fwhere's Jock?"

"Gone out with the Mixed Pickles, 'cause 'e thinks 'isself a bloomin' marksman," said Ortheris with scorn.

The "Mixed Pickles" were a detachment of picked shots, generally employed in clearing spurs of hills when the enemy were too impertinent. This taught the young officers how to handle men, and did not do the enemy much harm. Mulvaney and Ortheris strolled out of camp, and passed the Aurangabadis going to their road-making.

"You've got to sweat to-day," said Ortheris genially. "We're going to get your man. You didn't knock 'im out last night by any chance, any of you?"

"No. The pig went away mocking us. I had one shot at him," said a private. "He's my cousin, and I ought to have cleared our dishonour. But good luck to you."

They went cautiously to the north hill, Ortheris leading, because, as he explained, "this is a long-range show, an' I've got to do it." His was



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an almost passionate devotion to his rifle, which, by barrack-room report, he was supposed to kiss every night before turning in. Charges and scuffles he held in contempt, and, when they were inevitable, slipped between Mulvaney and Learoyd, bidding them to fight for his skin as well as their own. They never failed him. He trotted along, questing like a hound on a broken trail, through the wood of the north hill. At last he was satisfied, and threw himself down on the soft pine-needle slope that commanded a clear view of the watercourse and a brown, bare hillside beyond it. The trees made a scented darkness in which an army corps could have hidden from the sun-glare without.

“’Ere’s the tail o’ the wood,” said Ortheris. “’E’s got to come up the watercourse, ’cause it gives ’im cover. We’ll lay ’ere. ’Tain’t not ’arf so bloomin’ dusty neither.”

He buried his nose in a clump of scentless white violets. No one had come to tell the flowers that the season of their strength was long past, and they had bloomed merrily in the twilight of the pines.

“This is something like,” he said luxuriously. “Wot a ’evinly clear drop for a bullet acrost! How much d’you make it, Mulvaney?”

“Seven hunder. Maybe a trifle less, bekaze the air’s so thin.”

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*Wop! wop! wop!* went a volley of musketry on the rear face of the north hill.

“Curse them Mixed Pickles firin’ at nothin’! They’ll scare arf the country.”

“Thry a sightin’ shot in the middle of the row,” said Mulvaney, the man of many wiles. “There’s a red rock yonder he’ll be sure to pass. Quick!”

Ortheris ran his sight up to six hundred yards and fired. The bullet threw up a feather of dust by a clump of gentians at the base of the rock.

“Good enough!” said Ortheris, snapping the scale down. “You snick your sights to mine or a little lower. You’re always firin’ high. But remember, first shot to me. O Lordy! but it’s a lovely afternoon.”

The noise of the firing grew louder, and there was a tramping of men in the wood. The two lay very quiet, for they knew that the British soldier is desperately prone to fire at anything that moves or calls. Then Learoyd appeared, his tunic ripped across the breast by a bullet, looking ashamed of himself. He flung down on the pine-needles, breathing in snorts.

“One o’ them damned gardeners o’ th’ Pickles,” said he, fingering the rent. “Firin’ to th’ right flank, when he knowed I was there. If I knew who he was I’d ‘a’ rippen the hide offan him. Look at ma tunic!”

“That’s the spishil trustability av a marksman.

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Thrain him to hit a fly wid a stiddy rest at seven hunder, an' he'll loose on anythin' he sees or hears up to th' mile. You're well out av that fancy-frin' gang, Jock. Stay here."

"Bin frin' at the bloomin' wind in the bloomin' tree-tops," said Ortheris with a chuckle. "I'll show you some frin' later on."

They wallowed in the pine-needles, and the sun warmed them where they lay. The Mixed Pickles ceased firing, and returned to camp, and left the wood to a few scared apes. The watercourse lifted up its voice in the silence, and talked foolishly to the rocks. Now and again the dull thump of a blasting-charge three miles away told that the Aurangabadis were in difficulties with their road-making. The men smiled as they listened and lay still, soaking in the warm leisure. Presently Learoyd, between the whiffs of his pipe —

"Seems queer — about 'im yonder — desertin' at all."

"'E'll be a bloomin' side queerer when I've done with 'im," said Ortheris. They were talking in whispers, for the stillness of the wood and the desire of slaughter lay heavy upon them.

"I make no doubt he had his reasons for desertin'; but, my faith! I make less doubt ivry man has good reason for killin' him," said Mulvaney.

"Happen there was a lass tewed up wi' it. Men do more than more for th' sake of a lass."

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"They make most av us 'list. They've no manner av right to make us desert."

"Ah; they make us 'list, or their fathers do," said Learoyd softly, his helmet over his eyes.

Ortheris's brows contracted savagely. He was watching the valley. "If it's a girl I'll shoot the beggar twice over, an' second time for bein' a fool. You're blasted sentimental all of a sudden. Thinkin' o' your last near shave?"

"Nay, lad; Ah was but thinkin' o' what had happened."

"An' fwhat has happened, ye lumberin' child av calamity, that you're lowing like a cow-calf at the back av the pasture, an' suggestin' invidious excuses for the man Stanley's goin' to kill. Ye'll have to wait another hour yet, little man. Spit it out, Jock, an' bellow melojus to the moon. It takes an earthquake or a bullet graze to fetch aught out av you. Discoorse, Don Juan! The a-moors av Lotharius Learoyd! Stanley, kape a rowlin' rig'mintal eye on the valley."

"It's along o' yon hill there," said Learoyd, watching the bare sub-Himalayan spur that reminded him of his Yorkshire moors. He was speaking more to himself than his fellows. "Ay," said he, "Rumbolds Moor stands up ower Skip-ton town, an' Greenhow Hill stands up ower Pately Brig. I reckon you've never heeard tell o' Greenhow Hill, but yon bit o' bare stuff, if there

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was nobbut a white road windin', is like it; strangely like. Moors an' moors an' moors, wi' never a tree for shelter, an' gray houses wi' flag-stone rooves, and pewits cryin', an' a windhover goin' to and fro just like these kites. And cold! A wind that cuts you like a knife. You could tell Greenhow Hill folk by the red-apple colour o' their cheeks an' nose-tips, and their blue eyes driven into pin-points by the wind. Miners mostly, burrowin' for lead i' th' hillsides, followin' the trail of th' ore-vein same as a field-rat. It was the roughest minin' I ever seen. Yo'd come on a bit o' creakin' wood windlass like a well-head, an' you was let down i' th' bight of a rope, fendin' yoursen off the side wi' one hand, carryin' a candle stuck in a lump o' clay with t'other, an' clickin' hold of a rope with t'other hand."

"An' that's three of them," said Mulvaney, "Must be a good climate in those parts."

Learoyd took no heed.

"An' then yo' came to a level, where you crept on your hands and knees through a mile o' wind-in' drift, an' you come out into a cave-place as big as Leeds Town-hall, with a' engine pumpin' water from workin's 'at went deeper still. It's a queer country, let alone minin', for the hill is full of those natural caves, an' the rivers an' the becks drops into what they call pot-holes, an' come out again miles away."

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“Wot was you doin’ there?” said Ortheris.

“I was a young chap then, an’ mostly went wi’ ’osses, leadin’ coal and lead ore; but at th’ time I’m tellin’ on I was drivin’ the waggon-team i’ th’ big sumph. I didn’t belong to that country-side by rights. I went there because of a little difference at home, an’ at fust I took up wi’ a rough lot. One night we’d been drinkin’, an’ I must ha’ hed more than I could stand, or happen th’ ale was none so good. Though i’ them days, by for God, I never seed bad ale.” He flung his arms over his head, and gripped a vast handful of white violets. “Nah,” said he, “I never seed the ale I could not drink, the ’bacca I could not smoke, nor the lass I could not kiss. Well, we mun have a race home, the lot on us. I lost all th’ others, an’ when I was climbin’ ower one of them walls built o’ loose stones, I comes down into the ditch, stones and all, an’ broke my arm. Not as I knawed much about it, for I fell on th’ back av of my head, an’ was knocked stupid like. An’ when I come to mysen it were mornin’, an’ I were lyin’ on the settle i’ Jesse Roantree’s house-place, an’ ’Liza Roantree was settin’ sewin’. I ached all ovver, and my mouth were like a lime-kiln. She gave me a drink out of a china mug wi’ gold letters—‘A Present from Leeds’—as I looked at many and many a time at after. ‘Yo’re to lie still while Dr. Warbottom comes, because your arm’s broken,



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and father has sent a lad to fetch him. He found yo' when he was goin' to work, an' carried you here on his back,' sez she. 'Oa!' sez I; an' I shet my eyes, for I felt ashamed o' mysen. 'Father's gone to his work these three hours, an' he said he'd tell 'em to get somebody to drive the tram.' The clock ticked, an' a bee comed in the house, an' they rung i' my head like mill-wheels. An' she give me another drink an' settled the pillow. 'Eh, but yo're young to be getten drunk an' such like, but yo' won't do it again, will yo'?'—'Noa,' sez I, 'I wouldn't if she'd not but stop they mill-wheels clatterin'.'"

"Faith, it's a good thing to be nursed by a woman when you're sick!" said Mulvaney. "Dir' cheap at the price av twenty broken heads."

Ortheris turned to frown across the valley. He had not been nursed by many women in his life.

"An' then Dr. Warbottom comes ridin' up, an' Jesse Roantree along with 'im. He was a high-larned doctor, but he talked wi' poor folks same as theirsens. 'What's ta bin agaate on naa?' he sings out. 'Brekkin' tha thick head?' An' he felt me all ovver. 'That's none broken. Tha' nobbut knocked a bit sillier than ordinary, an' that's daaft eneaf.' An' soa he went on, callin' me all the names he could think on, but settin' my arm, wi' Jesse's help, as careful as could be. 'Yo'



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mun let the big oaf bide here a bit, Jesse,' he says, when he hed strapped me up an' given me a dose o' physic; 'an' you an' Liza will tend him, though he's scarcelins worth the trouble. An' tha'll lose tha work,' sez he, 'an' tha'll be upon th' Sick Club for a couple o' months an' more. Doesn't tha think tha's a fool?' "

"But whin was a young man, high or low, the other av a fool, I'd like to know?" said Mulvaney. "Sure, folly's the only safe way to wisdom, for I've thried it."

"Wisdom!" grinned Ortheris, scanning his comrades with uplifted chin. "You're bloomin' Solomons, you two, ain't you?"

Learoyd went calmly on, with a steady eye like an ox chewing the cud.

"And that was how I come to know 'Liza Roan-tree. There's some tunes as she used to sing—aw, she were always singin'—that fetches Greenhow Hill before my eyes as fair as yon brow across there. And she would learn me to sing bass, an' I was to go to th' chapel wi' 'em, where Jesse and she led the singin', th' old man playin' the fiddle. He was a strange chap, old Jesse, fair mad wi' music, an' he made me promise to learn the big fiddle when my arm was better. It belonged to him, and it stood up in a big case alongside o' th' eight-day clock; but Willie Satterthwaite, as played it in the chapel, had gotten deaf as a door-post, and

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it vexed Jesse, as he had to rap him ower his head wi' th' fiddle-stick to make him give ower sawin' at th' right time.

“But there was a black drop in it all, an' it was a man in a black coat that brought it. When th' Primitive Methodist preacher came to Greenhow, he would always stop wi' Jesse Roantree, an' he laid hold of me from th' beginning. It seemed I wor a soul to be saved, and he meant to do it. At th' same time I jealoused 'at he were keen o' savin' 'Liza Roantree's soul as well, and I could ha' killed him many a time. An' this went on till one day I broke out, an' borrowed th' brass for a drink from 'Liza. After fower days I come back, wi' my tail between my legs, just to see 'Liza again. But Jesse were at home an' th' preacher—th' Reverend Amos Barraclough. 'Liza said naught, but a bit o' red come into her face as were white of a regular thing. Says Jesse, tryin' his best to be civil, ‘Nay, lad, it's like this. You've gotten to choose which way it's goin' to be. I'll ha' nobody across ma doorstep as goes a-drinkin', an' borrows my lass's money to spend i' their drink. Ho'd tha tongue, 'Liza,’ sez he, when she wanted to put in a word 'at I were welcome to th' brass, and she were none afraid that I wouldn't pay it back. Then the Reverend cuts in, seein' as Jesse were losin' his temper, an' they fair beat me among them. But it were 'Liza, as looked an' said naught,

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as did more than either o' their tongues, an' soa I concluded to get converted."

"Fwhat?" shouted Mulvaney. Then, checking himself, he said softly, "Let be! Let be! Sure the Blessed Virgin is the mother of all religion an' most women; an' there's a dale av piety in a girl if the men would only let ut stay there. I'd ha' been converted myself under the circumstances."

"Nay, but," pursued Learoyd with a blush, "I meant it."

Ortheris laughed as loudly as he dared, having regard to his business at the time.

"Ay, Ortheris, you may laugh, but you didn't know yon preacher Barraclough—a little white-faced chap, wi' a voice as 'u'd wile a bird off an a bush, and a way o' layin' hold of folks as made them think they'd never had a live man for a friend before. You never saw him, an'—an'—you never seed 'Liza Roantree—never seed 'Liza Roantree. . . . Happen it was as much 'Liza as th' preacher and her father, but anyways they all meant it, an' I was fair 'shamed o' mysen, an' so I become what they call a changed charácter. And when I think on, it's hard to believe as yon chap going to prayer-meetin's, chapel, and class-meetin's were me. But I never had naught to say for mysen, though there was a deal o' shoutin', and old Sammy Strother, as were almost clemmed

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to death and doubled up with the rheumatics, would sing out, 'Joyful! Joyful!' and 'at it were better to go up to heaven in a coal-basket than down to hell i' a coach an' six. And he would put his poor old claw on my shoulder, sayin', 'Doesn't tha feel it, tha great lump? Doesn't tha feel it?' An' sometimes I thought I did, and then again I thought I didn't, an' how was that?"

"The iverlastin' nature av mankind," said Mulvaney. "An', furthermore, I misdoubt you were built for the Primitive Methodians. They're a new corps anyways. I hold by the Ould Church, for she's the mother of them all—ay, an' the father, too. I like her bekaze she's most remarkable regimintal in her fittings. I may die in Honolulu, Nova Zambra, or Cape Cayenne, but wherever I die, me bein' fwhat I am, an' a priest handy, I go under the same orders an' the same words an' the same unction as tho' the Pope himself come down from the roof av St. Peter's to see me off. There's neither high nor low, nor broad nor deep, nor betwixt nor between wid her, an' that's what I like. But mark you, she's no manner av Church for a wake man, bekaze she takes the body and the soul av him, onless he has his proper work to do. I remember when my father died that was three months comin' to his grave; begad he'd ha' sold the shebeen above our heads for ten minutes'

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quittance of purgathory. An' he did all he could. That's why I say ut takes a strong man to dale with the Ould Church, an' for that reason you'll find so many women go there. An' that same's a conundrum."

"Wot's the use o' worritin' 'bout these things?" said Ortheris. "You're bound to find all out quicker nor you want to, any'ow." He jerked the cartridge out of the breech-block into the palm of his hand. "'Ere's my chaplain," he said, and made the venomous black-headed bullet bow like a marionette. "'E's goin' to teach a man all about which is which, an' wot's true, after all, before sundown. But wot 'appened after that, Jock?"

"There was one thing they boggled at, and almost shut th' gate i' my face for, and that were my dog Blast, th' only one saved out o' a litter o' pups as was blowed up when a keg o' minin'-powder loosed off in th' store-keeper's hut. They liked his name no better than his business, which were fightin' every dog he comed across; a rare good dog, wi' spots o' black and pink on his face, one ear gone, and lame o' one side wi' being driven in a basket through an iron roof a matter of half a mile.

"They said I mun give him up 'cause he were worldly and low; and would I let mysen be shut out of heaven for the sake on a dog? 'Nay,' says

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I, 'if th' door isn't wide enough for th' pair on us, we'll stop outside, for we'll none be parted.' And th' preacher spoke up for Blast, as had a likin' for him from th' first—I reckon that was why I come to like th' preacher—and wouldn't hear o' changin' his name to Bless, as some o' them wanted. So th' pair on us became reg'lar chapel-members. But it's hard for a young chap o' my build to cut traces from the world, th' flesh, an' the devil all uv a heap. Yet I stuck to it for a long time, while th' lads as used to stand about th' town-end an' lean ower th' bridge, spittin' into th' beck o' a Sunday, would call after me, 'Sitha, Learoyd, when's ta bean to preach, 'cause we're comin' to hear tha.'—'Ho'd tha jaw. He hasn't gotten th' white choaker on ta morn,' another lad would say, and I had to double my fists hard i' th' bottom of my Sunday coat, and say to mysen, 'If 'twere Monday and I warn't a member o' the Primitive Methodists, I'd leather all th' lot of yond'.' That was th' hardest of all—to know that I could fight and I mustn't fight."

Sympathetic grunts from Mulvaney.

"So what wi' singin', practisin', and class-meetin's, and th' big fiddle, as he made me take between my knees, I spent a deal o' time i' Jesse Roantree's house-place. But often as I was there, th' preacher fared to me to go oftener, and both th' old man an' th' young woman were pleased to

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have him. He lived i' Pately Brig, as were a goodish step off, but he come. He come all the same. I liked him as well or better as any man I'd ever seen i' one way, and yet I hated him wi' all my heart i' t'other, and we watched each other like cat and mouse, but civil as you please, for I was on my best behaviour, and he was that fair and open that I was bound to be fair with him. Rare good company he was if I hadn't wanted to wring his cliver little neck half of the time. Often and often when he was goin' from Jesse's I'd set him a bit on the road."

"See 'im 'ome, you mean?" said Ortheris.

"Ay. It's a way we have i' Yorkshire o' seein' friends off. Yon was a friend as I didn't want to come back, and he didn't want me to come back neither, and so we'd walk together towards Pately, and then he'd set me back again, and there we'd be wal two o'clock i' the mornin' settin' each other to an' fro like a blasted pair o' pendulums 'twixt hill and valley, long after th' light had gone out i' 'Liza's window, as both on us had been looking at, pretending to watch the moon."

"Ah!" broke in Mulvaney, "ye'd no chanst against the maraudin' psalm-singer. They'll take the airs an' the graces instid av the man nine times out av ten, an' they only find the blunder late! — the wimmen."

"That's just where yo're wrong," said Learoyd,



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reddening under the freckled tan of his cheeks. "I was th' first wi' Liza, an' yo'd think that were enough. But th' parson were a steady-gaited sort o' chap, and Jesse were strong o' his side, and all th' women i' the congregation dinned it to 'Liza 'at she were fair fond to take up wi' a wastrel ne'er-do-weel like me, as was scarcelins respectable an' a fighting dog at his heels. It was all very well for her to be doing me good and saving my soul, but she must mind as she didn't do herself harm. They talk o' rich folk bein' stuck up an' genteel, but for cast-iron pride o' respectability there's naught like poor chapel folk. It's as cold as th' wind o' Greenhow Hill — ay, and colder, for 'twill never change. And now I come to think on it, one o'th' strangest things I know is 'at they couldn't abide th' thought o' soldiering. There's a vast o' fightin' i' th' Bible, and there's a deal of Methodists i' th' army; but to hear chapel folk talk yo'd think that soldierin' were next door, an' t'other side, to hangin'. I' their meetin's all their talk is o' fightin'. When Sammy Strother were stuck for summat to say in his prayers, he'd sing out, 'Th' sword o' th' Lord and o' Gideon.' They were allus at it about puttin' on th' whole armour o' righteousness, an' fightin' the good fight o' faith. And then, atop o' 't all, they held a prayer-meetin' ower a young chap as wanted to 'list and nearly deafened him, till he picked up his hat and fair

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ran away. And they'd tell tales in th' Sunday-school o' bad lads as had been thumped and brayed for bird-nesting o' Sundays and playin' truant o' week-days, and how they took to wres-tlin', dog-fightin', rabbit-runnin', and drinkin', till at last, as if 'twere a hepitaph on a gravestone, they damned him across th' moors wi', 'an' then he went and 'listed for a soldier,' an' they'd all fetch a deep breath, and throw up their eyes like a hen drinkin'."

"Fwhy is ut?" said Mulyaney, bringing down his hand on his thigh with a crack. "In the name av God, fwhy is ut? I've seen ut, tu. They cheat an' they swindle an' they lie an' they slander, an' fifty things fifty times worse; but the last an' the worst by their reckonin' is to serve the Widdy honest. It's like the talk av childher—seein' things all round."

"Plucky lot of fightin' good fights of whatser-name they'd do if we didn't see they had a quiet place to fight in. And such fightin' as theirs is! Cats on the tiles. T'other callin' to which to come on. I'd give a month's pay to get some o' them broad-backed beggars in London sweatin' through a day's road-makin' an' a night's rain. They'd carry on a deal afterwards—same as we're supposed to carry on. I've bin turned out of a measly 'arf-license pub down Lambeth way, full o' greasy kebmén, 'fore now," said Ortheris with an oath.

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"Maybe you were dhrunk," said Mulvaney soothingly.

"Worse nor that. The Forders were drunk. I was wearin' the Queen's uniform."

"I'd no particular thought to be a soldier i' them days," said Learoyd, still keeping his eye on the bare hill opposite, "but this sort o' talk put it i' my head. They was so good, th' chapel folk, that they tumbled ower t'other side. But I stuck to it for 'Liza's sake, specially as she was learning me to sing the bass part in a horotorio as Jesse were gettin' up. She sung like a throstle hersen, and we had practisin's night after night for a matter of three months."

"I know what a horotorio is," said Ortheris pertly. "It's a sort of chaplain's sing-song — words all out of the Bible, and hullabaloojah choruses."

"Most Greenhow Hill folks played some instrument or t'other, an' they all sung so you might have heard them miles away, and they were so pleased wi' the noise they made they didn't fair to want anybody to listen. The preacher sung high seconds when he wasn't playin' the flute, an' they set me, as hadn't got far with the big fiddle, again' Willie Satterthwaite, to jog his elbow when he had to get a' gate playin'. Old Jesse was happy if ever a man was, for he were th' conductor an' th' first fiddle an' th' leadin' singer, beatin' time



Mulvaney, Ortheris, and Learoyd



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wi' his fiddle-stick, till at times he'd rap with it on the table, and cry out, 'Now, you mun all stop; it's my turn.' And he'd face round to his front, fair sweating wi pride, to sing th' tenor solos. But he were grandest i' th' choruses, waggin' his head, flinging his arms round like a windmill, and singin' hissself black in the face. A rare singer were Jesse.

"Yo' see, I was not o' much account wi' 'em all exceptin' to 'Liza Roantree, and I had a deal o' time settin' quiet at meetings and horotorio practises to hearken their talk, and if it were strange to me at beginnin', it got stranger still at after, when I was shut on it, and could study what it meant.

"Just after th' horotorios come off, 'Liza, as had allus been weakly like, was took very bad. I walked Dr. Warbottom's horse up and down a deal of times while he were inside, where they wouldn't let me go, though I fair ached to see her.

"'She'll be better i' noo, lad — better i' noo,' he used to say. 'Tha mun ha' patience.' Then they said if I was quiet I might go in, and th' Reverend Amos Barraclough used to read to her lyin' propped up among th' pillows. Then she began to mend a bit, and they let me carry her on to th' settle, and when it got warm again she went about same as afore. Th' preacher and me and Blast was a deal together i' them days, and

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i' one way we was rare good comrades. But I could ha' stretched him time and again with a good will. I mind one day he said he would like to go down into th' bowels o' th' earth, and see how th' Lord had builded th' framework o' th' everlastin' hills. He were one of them chaps as had a gift o' sayin' things. They rolled off the tip of his cliver tongue, same as Mulvaaney here, as would ha' made a rare good preacher if he had nobbut given his mind to it. I lent him a suit o' miner's kit as almost buried th' little man, and his white face down i' th' coat-collar and hat-flap looked like the face of a boggart, and he cowered down i' th' bottom o' the waggon. I was drivin' a tram as led up a bit of an incline up to th' cave where th' engine was pumpin', and where th' ore was brought up and put into th' waggons as went down o' themselves, me puttin' th' brake on and th' horses a-trottin' after. Long as it was daylight we were good friends, but when we got fair into th' dark, and could nobbut see th' day shinin' at the hole like a lamp at a street-end, I feeled downright wicked. Ma religion dropped all away from me when I looked back at him as were always comin' between me and 'Liza. The talk was 'at they were to be wed when she got better, an' I couldn't get her to say yes or nay to it. He began to sing a hymn in his thin voice, and I came out wi' a chorus that was all cussin' an' swearin' at my



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horses, an' I began to know how I hated him. He were such a little chap, too. I could drop him wi' one hand down Garstang's Copper-hole — a place where th' beck slithered ower th' edge on a rock, and fell wi' a bit of a whisper into a pit as no rope i' Greenhow could plump."

Again Learoyd rooted up the innocent violets. "Ay, he should see th' bowels o' th' earth an' never naught else. I could take him a mile or two along th' drift, and leave him wi' his candle doused to cry hallelujah, wi' none to hear him and say amen. I was to lead him down th' ladder-way to th' drift where Jesse Roantree was workin', and why shouldn't he slip on th' ladder, wi' my feet on his fingers till they loosed grip, and I put him down wi' my heel? If I went fust down th' ladder I could click hold on him and chuck him over my head, so as he should go squshin' down the shaft, breakin' his bones at ev'ry timberin' as Bill Appleton did when he was fresh, and hadn't a bone left when he wrought to th' bottom. Niver a blasted leg to walk from Pately. Niver an arm to put round 'Liza Roantree's waist. Niver no more — niver no more."

The thick lips curled back over the yellow teeth, and that flushed face was not pretty to look upon. Mulvaney nodded sympathy, and Ortheris, moved by his comrade's passion, brought up the rifle to his shoulder, and searched the hillside for his

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quarry, muttering ribaldry about a sparrow, a spout, and a thunder-storm. The voice of the watercourse supplied the necessary small talk till Learoyd picked up his story.

“But it’s none so easy to kill a man like yon. When I’d given up my horses to th’ lad as took my place and I was showin’ th’ preacher th’ workin’s, shoutin’ into his ear across th’ clang o’ th’ pumpin’-engines, I saw he were afraid o’ naught; and when the lamplight showed his black eyes, I could feel as he was masterin’ me again. I were no better nor Blast chained up short and growlin’ i’ the depths of him while a strange dog went safe past.

“‘Th’art a coward and a fool,’ I said to mysen; an’ I wrestled i’ my mind again’ him till, when we come to Garstang’s Copper-hole, I laid hold o’ the preacher and lifted him up over my head and held him into the darkest on it. ‘Now, lad,’ I says, ‘it’s to be one or t’other on us — thee or me — for ‘Liza Roantree. Why, isn’t thee afraid for thy-sen?’ I says, for he was still i’ my arms as a sack. ‘Nay; I’m but afraid for thee, my poor lad, as knows naught,’ says he. I set him down on th’ edge, an’ th’ beck run stiller, an’ there was no more buzzin’ in my head like when th’ bee come through th’ window o’ Jesse’s house. ‘What dost tha mean?’ says I.

“‘I’ve often thought as thou ought to know,’

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says he, 'but 'twas hard to tell thee. 'Liza Roantree's for neither on us, nor for nobody o' this earth. Dr. Warbottom says — and he knows her, and her mother before her — that she is in a decline, and she cannot live six months longer. He's known it for many a day. Steady, John! Steady!' says he. And that weak little man pulled me further back and set me again' him, and talked it all over quiet and still, me turnin' a bunch o' candles in my hand, and counting them ower and ower again as I listened. A deal on it were th' regular preachin' talk, but there were a vast lot as made me begin to think as he were more of a man than I'd ever given him credit for, till I were cut as deep for him as I were for mysen.

"Six candles we had, and we crawled and climbed all that day while they lasted, and I said to mysen, 'Liza Roantree hasn't six months to live.' And when we came into th' daylight again we were like dead men to look at, an' Blast come behind us without so much as waggin' his tail. When I saw 'Liza again she looked at me a minute and says, 'Who's telled tha? For I see tha knows.' And she tried to smile as she kissed me, and I fair broke down.

"Yo' see, I was a young chap i' them days, and had seen naught o' life, let alone death, as is allus a-waitin'. She telled me as Dr. Warbottom said as Greenhow air was too keen, and they were

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goin' to Bradford, to Jesse's brother David, as worked i' a mill, and I mun hold up like a man and a Christian, and she'd pray for me. Well, and they went away, and the preacher that same back end o' th' year were appointed to another circuit, as they call it, and I were left alone on Greenhow Hill.

"I tried, and I tried hard, to stick to th' chapel, but 'tweren't th' same thing at after. I hadn't 'Liza's voice to follow i' th' singin', nor her eyes a-shinin' acrost their heads. And i' th' class meetings they said as I mun have some experiences to tell, and I hadn't a word to say for mysen.

"Blast and me moped a good deal, and happen we didn't behave ourselves ower well, for they dropped us and wondered however they'd come to take us up. I can't tell how we got through th' time, while i' th' winter I gave up my job and went to Bradford. Old Jesse were at th' door o' th' house, in a long street o' little houses. He'd been sendin' th' children 'way as were clatterin' their clogs in th' causeway, for she were asleep.

"'Is it thee?' he says; 'but you're not to see her. I'll none have her wakened for a nowt like thee. She's goin' fast, and she mun go in peace. Thou'lt never be good for naught i' th' world, and as long as thou live thou'lt never play the big fiddle. Get away, lad, get away!' So he shut the door softly i' my face.

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“Nobody never made Jesse my master, but it seemed to me he was about right, and I went away into the town and knocked up against a recruiting sergeant. The old tales o’ th’ chapel folk came buzzin’ into my head. I was to get away, and this were th’ regular road for the likes o’ me. I ’listed there and then, took th’ Widow’s shillin’, and had a bunch o’ ribbons pinned i’ my hat.

“But next day I found my way to David Roan-tree’s door, and Jesse came to open it. Says he, ‘Thou’s come back again wi’ th’ devil’s colours flyin’—thy true colours, as I always telled thee.’

“But I begged and prayed of him to let me see her nobbut to say good-bye, till a woman calls down th’ stairway, ‘She says John Learoyd’s to come up.’ Th’ old man shifts aside in a flash, and lays his hand on my arm, quite gentle like. ‘But thou’lt be quiet, John,’ says he, ‘for she’s rare and weak. Thou was allus a good lad.’

“Her eyes were all alive wi’ light, and her hair was thick on the pillow round her, but her cheeks were thin—thin to frighten a man that’s strong. ‘Nay, father, yo’ mayn’t say th’ devil’s colours. Them ribbons is pretty.’ An’ she held out her hands for th’ hat, an’ she put all straight as a woman will wi’ ribbons. ‘Nay, but what they’re pretty,’ she says. ‘Eh, but I’d ha’ liked to see thee i’ thy red coat, John, for thou was allus my own lad—my very own lad, and none else.’

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"She lifted up her arms, and they come round my neck i' a gentle grip, and they slacked away, and she seemed fainting. 'Now yo' mun get away, lad,' says Jesse, and I picked up my hat and I came downstairs.

"Th' recruiting sergeant were waitin' for me at th' corner public-house. 'Yo've seen your sweetheart?' says he. 'Yes, I've seen her,' says I. 'Well, we'll have a quart now, and you'll do your best to forget her,' says he, bein' one o' them smart, bustlin' chaps. 'Ay, sergeant,' says I. 'Forget her.' And I've been forgettin' her ever since."

He threw away the wilted clump of white violets as he spoke. Ortheris suddenly rose to his knees, his rifle at his shoulder, and peered across the valley in the clear afternoon light. His chin cuddled the stock, and there was a twitching of the muscles of the right cheek as he sighted; Private Stanley Ortheris was engaged on his business. A speck of white crawled up the watercourse.

"See that beggar? . . . Got 'im."

Seven hundred yards away, and a full two hundred down the hillside, the deserter of the Aurangabadis pitched forward, rolled down a red rock, and lay very still, with his face in a clump of blue gentians, while a big raven flapped out of the pine wood to make investigation.

"That's a clean shot, little man," said Mulvaney. Learoyd thoughtfully watched the smoke clear

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away. "Happen there was a lass tewed up wi' him, too," said he.

Ortheris did not reply. He was staring across the valley with the smile of the artist who looks on the completed work.



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THE autumn batch of recruits for the Old Regiment had just been uncartered. As usual they were said to be the worst draft that had ever come from the Depot. Mulvaney looked them over, grunted scornfully, and immediately reported himself very sick.

"Is it the regular autumn fever?" said the doctor, who knew something of Terence's ways. "Your temperature's normal."

"'Tis a hundred and thirty-seven rookies to the bad, Sorr. I'm not very sick now, but I will be dead if these boys are thrown at me in my rejuiced condition. Doctor, dear, supposin' you was in charge of three cholera camps an'——"

"Go to hospital, then, you old contriver," said the doctor, laughing.

Terence bundled himself into a blue bedgown,—Dinah Shadd was away attending to a major's lady, who preferred Dinah without a diploma to anybody else with a hundred,—put a pipe in his teeth, and paraded the hospital balcony exhorting Ortheris to be a father to the new recruits.

"They're mostly your own sort, little man," he

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said with a grin; "the top-spit av Whitechapel. I'll interogue thim whin they're more like something they niver will be,—an' that's a good honist soldier like me."

Ortheris yapped indignantly. He knew as well as Terence what the coming work meant, and he thought Terence's conduct mean. Then he strolled off to look at the new cattle, who were staring at the unfamiliar landscape with large eyes, and asking if the kites were eagles and the pariah-dogs jackals.

"Well, you are a holy set of bean-faced beggars, *you* are," he said genially to a knot in the barrack square. Then running his eye over them,—  
"Fried fish an' whelks is about your sort. Blimy if they haven't sent some pink-eyed Jews too. You chap with the greasy 'ed, which o' the Solomons was your father, Moses?"

"My name's Anderson," said a voice sullenly.

"Oh, Samuelson! All right, Samuelson! An' how many o' the likes o' you Sheenies are comin' to spoil B Company?"

There is no scorn so complete as that of the old soldier for the new. It is right that this should be so. A recruit must learn first that he is not a man, but a thing which in time, and by the mercy of Heaven, may develop into a soldier of the Queen if it takes care and attends to good advice. Ortheris's tunic was open, his cap overlapped one

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eye, and his hands were behind his back as he walked round growing more contemptuous at each step. The recruits did not dare to answer, for they were new boys in a strange school, who had called themselves soldiers at the *Depôt* in comfortable England.

“Not a single pair o’ shoulders in the whole lot. I’ve seen some bad drafts in my time,—some bloomin’ bad drafts; but this ’ere draft beats any draft I’ve ever known. Jock, come an’ look at these squidgy, ham-shanked beggars.”

Learoyd was walking across the square. He arrived slowly, circled round the knot as a whale circles round a shoal of small fry, said nothing, and went away whistling.

“Yes, you may well look sheepy,” Ortheris squeaked to the boys. “It’s the likes of you breaks the ’earts of the likes of us. We’ve got to lick you into shape, and never a ha’penny extry do we get for so doin’, and you ain’t never grateful neither. Don’t you go thinkin’ it’s the Colonel nor yet the company orficer that makes you. It’s me, you Johnnie Raws—you Johnnie *bloomin’* Raws!”

A company officer had come up unperceived behind Ortheris at the end of this oration. “You may be right, Ortheris,” he said quietly, “but I shouldn’t shout it.” The recruits grinned as Ortheris saluted and collapsed.

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Some days afterwards I was privileged to look over the new batch, and they were everything that Ortheris had said, and more. B Company had been devastated by forty or fifty of them; and B Company's drill on parade was a sight to shudder at. Ortheris asked them lovingly whether they had not been sent out by mistake, and whether they had not better post themselves back to their friends. Learoyd thrashed them methodically one by one, without haste but without slovenliness; and the older soldiers took the remnants from Learoyd and went over them in their own fashion. Mulvaney stayed in hospital, and grinned from the balcony when Ortheris called him a shirker and other worse names.

"By the grace av God we'll brew men av them yet," Terence said one day. "Be vartuous an' parsevere, me son. There's the makin's av colonels in that mob if we only go deep enough — wid a belt."

"We!" Ortheris replied, dancing with rage. "I just like you and your 'we's.' 'Ere's B Company drillin' like a drunk Militia reg'ment."

"So I've been officially acquent," was the answer from on high; "but I'm too sick this tide to make certain."

"An' you, you fat Hirishman, shiftin' and shirk-in' up there among the arrerroot an' the sago."

"An' the port wine — you've forgot the port

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wine, Orth'ris; it's none so bad." Terence smacked his lips provokingly.

"And we're wore off our feet with these 'ere—kangaroos. Come out o' that, an' earn your pay. Come on down outer that, an' *do* somethin' 'stead o' grinnin' up there like a Jew monkey, you frow-sy-'eaded Fenian."

"When I'm betther av my various complaints I'll have a little private talkin' wid you. In the meanwhile,—duck!"

Terence flung an empty medicine bottle at Ortheris's head and dropped into a long chair, and Ortheris came to tell me his opinion of Mulvaney three times over,—each time entirely varying all the words.

"There'll be a smash one o' these days," he concluded. "Well, it's none o' my fault, but it's 'ard on B Company."

It was very hard on B Company, for twenty seasoned men cannot push twice that number of fools into their places and keep their own places at the same time. The recruits should have been more evenly distributed through the regiment, but it seemed good to the Colonel to mass them in a company where there was a large proportion of old soldiers. He found his reward early one morning when the battalion was advancing by companies in echelon from the right. The order was given to form company squares, which are compact little

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bricks of men, very unpleasant for a line of charging cavalry to deal with. B Company was on the left flank, and had ample time to know what was going on. For that reason presumably it gathered itself into a thing like a decayed aloe-clump, the bayonets pointing anywhere in general and nowhere in particular, and in that clump, roundel, or mob it stayed till the dust had gone down and the Colonel could see and speak. He did both, and the speaking part was admitted by the regiment to be the finest thing that the "old man" had ever risen to since one delightful day at a sham-fight, when a cavalry division had occasion to walk over his line of skirmishers. He said, almost weeping, that he had given no order for rallying groups, and that he preferred to see a little dressing among the men occasionally. He then apologised for having mistaken B Company for men. He said that they were but weak little children, and that since he could not offer them each a perambulator and a nursemaid (this may sound comic to read, but B Company heard it by word of mouth and winced), perhaps the best thing for them to do would be to go back to squad drill. To that end he proposed sending them, out of their turn, to garrison duty in Fort Amara, five miles away,—D Company were next for this detestable duty, and nearly cheered the Colonel. There he devoutly hoped that their



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own subalterns would drill them to death, as they were of no use in this their present life.

It was an exceedingly painful scene, and I made haste to be near B Company barracks when parade was dismissed and the men were free to talk. There was no talking at first because each old soldier took a new draft and kicked him very severely. The non-commissioned officers had neither eyes nor ears for these accidents. They left the barracks to themselves, and Ortheris improved the occasion by a speech. I did not hear that speech, but fragments of it were quoted for weeks afterwards. It covered the birth, parentage, and education of every man in the company by name; it gave a complete account of Fort Amara from a sanitary and social point of view; and it wound up with an abstract of the whole duty of a soldier, each recruit his use in life, and Ortheris's views on the use and fate of the recruits of B Company.

"You can't drill, you can't walk, you can't shoot,—you,—you awful rookies! Wot's the good of you? You eats and you sleeps, and you eats, and you goes to the doctor for medicine when your innards is out o' order, for all the world as if you was bloomin' generals. An' now you've topped it all, you bats'-eyed beggars, with getting us druv out to that stinkin' Fort 'Am-merer. We'll fort you when we get out there;



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yes, an' we'll 'ammer you too. Don't you think you've come into the Harmy to drink Heno, an' clot your comp'ny, an' lie on your cots an' scratch your fat heads. You can do that at 'ome sellin' matches, which is all you're fit for, you keb-huntin', penny-toy, bootlace, baggage-tout, 'orse-'oldin', sandwich-backed se-wers, you.<sup>1</sup> I've spoke you as fair as I know 'ow, and you give good 'eed, 'cause if Mulvaney stops skrimshankin'—gets out o' 'orspital—when we're in the Fort, I lay your lives will be trouble to you."

That was Ortheris's peroration, and it caused B Company to be christened the Boot-black Brigade. With this disgrace on their slack shoulders they went to garrison duty at Fort Amara under three officers who were under instructions to twist their little tails. The army, unlike every other profession, cannot be taught through shilling books. First a man must suffer, then he must learn his work, and the self-respect that that knowledge brings. The learning is hard, in a land where Our army is not a red thing that walks down the street to be looked at, but a living, tramping reality liable to be needed at the shortest notice, when there is no time to say, "Hadn't you better?" and "Won't you, please?"

The company officers divided themselves into three. When Brander the captain was wearied,

<sup>1</sup> Ortheris meant *soors* — which means pigs.

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he gave over to Maydew, and when Maydew was hoarse he ordered the junior subaltern Oules to bucket the men through squad and company drill, till Brander could go on again. Out of parade hours the old soldiers spoke to the recruits as old soldiers will, and between the four forces at work on them, the new draft began to stand on their feet and feel that they belonged to a good and honorable service. This was proved by their once or twice resenting Ortheris's technical lectures.

"Drop it now, lad," said Learoyd, coming to the rescue. "Th' pups are biting back. They're none so rotten as we looked for."

"Ho! Yes. You think yourself soldiers now, 'cause you don't fall over each other on p'rade, don't you? You think 'cause the dirt don't cake off you week's end to week's end that you're clean men. You think 'cause you can fire your rifle without more nor shuttin' both eyes, you're something to fight, don't you? You'll know later on," said Ortheris to the barrack-room generally. "Not but what you're a little better than you was," he added, with a gracious wave of his cutty.

It was in this transition stage that I came across the new draft once more. Their officers, in the zeal of youth forgetting that the old soldiers who stiffened the sections must suffer equally with the raw material under hammering, had made all a

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little stale and unhandy with continuous drill in the square, instead of marching the men into the open and suppling them with skirmishing-drill. The month of garrison duty in the Fort was nearly at an end, and B Company were quite fit for a self-respecting regiment to drill with. They had no style or spring—that would come in time—but as far as they went they were passable. I met Maydew one day and inquired after their health. He told me that young Oules was putting a polish on a half-company of them in a great square by the east bastion of the Fort that afternoon. Because the day was Saturday I went off to taste the full beauty of leisure in watching another man hard at work.

The fat forty-pound muzzle-loaders on the east bastion made very comfortable resting-places. You could sprawl full length on the iron warmed by the afternoon sun to blood-heat, and command an easy view of the parade-ground which lay between the powder-magazine and the curtain of the bastion.

I saw a half-company called over and told off for drill, saw Oules come from his quarters, tugging at his gloves, and heard the first '*Shun!*' that locks the ranks and shows that work has begun. Then I went off on my own thoughts, the squeaking of the boots and the rattle of the rifles making a good accompaniment, and the line of red coats

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and black trousers a suitable background to them all. They concerned the formation of a territorial army for India,—an army of specially paid men enlisted for twelve years' service in her Majesty's Indian possessions, with the option of extending, on medical certificate, for another five and the certainty of a pension at the end. They would be such an army as the world had never seen,—one hundred thousand trained men drawing annually five, no, fifteen, thousand men from England, making India their home, and allowed to marry in reason. Yes, I thought, watching the line shift to and fro, break and re-form, we would buy back Cashmere from the drunken imbecile who was turning it into a hell, and there we would plant our much-married regiments,—the men who had served ten years of their time,—and there they should breed us white soldiers, and perhaps a second fighting-line of Eurasians. At all events, Cashmere was the only place in India that the Englishman could colonise, and if we had foothold there we could. . . . Oh, it was a beautiful dream! I left that territorial army, swelled to a quarter of a million men, far behind, swept on as far as an independent India, hiring war-ships from the mother country, guarding Aden on the one side and Singapore on the other, paying interest on her loans with beautiful regularity, but borrowing no men from beyond her own borders—a

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colonised, manufacturing India with a permanent surplus and her own flag. I had just installed myself as Viceroy, and by virtue of my office had shipped four million sturdy, thrifty natives to the Malayan Archipelago, where labour is always wanted and the Chinese pour in too quickly, when I became aware that things were not going smoothly with the half-company. There was a great deal too much shuffling and shifting and "as you were-ing." The non-commissioned officers were snapping at the men, and I fancied Oules backed one of his orders with an oath. He was in no position to do this, because he was a junior who had not yet learned to pitch his word of command in the same key twice running. Sometimes he squeaked, and sometimes he grunted, and a clear, full voice with a ring in it has more to do with drill than people think. He was nervous both on parade and in mess, because he was unproven and knew it. One of his majors had said in his hearing, "Oules has a skin or two to slough yet, and he hasn't the sense to be aware of it." That remark had stayed in Oules's mind and caused him to think about himself in little things, which is not the best training for a young man. He tried to be cordial at mess, and became over-effusive. Then he tried to stand on his dignity, and appeared sulky and boorish. He was only hunting for the just medium and the proper note,

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and had found neither because he had never faced himself in a big thing. With his men he was as ill at ease as he was with his mess, and his voice betrayed him. I heard two orders and then:—"Sergeant, what *is* that rear-rank man doing, damn him?" That was sufficiently bad. A company officer ought not to ask sergeants for information. He commands; and commands are not held by syndicates.

It was too dusty to see the drill accurately, but I could hear the excited little voice pitching from octave to octave, and the uneasy ripple of badgered or bad-tempered files running down the ranks. Oules had come on parade as sick of his duty as were the men of theirs. The hot sun had told on everybody's temper, but most of all on the youngest man's. He had evidently lost his self-control, and not possessing the nerve or the knowledge to break off till he had recovered it again, was making bad worse by ill-language.

The men shifted their ground and came close under the gun I was lying on. They were wheeling quarter-right and they did it very badly, in the natural hope of hearing Oules swear again. He could have taught them nothing new, but they enjoyed the exhibition. Instead of swearing, Oules lost his head completely, and struck out nervously at the wheeling flank-man with a little Malacca riding-cane that he held in his hand for a pointer.



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The cane was topped with thin silver over lacquer, and the silver had worn through in one place, leaving a triangular flap sticking up. I had just time to see that Oules had thrown away his commission by striking a soldier, when I heard the rip of cloth and a piece of gray shirt showed under the torn scarlet on the man's shoulder. It had been the merest nervous flick of an exasperated boy, but quite enough to forfeit his commission, since it had been dealt in anger to a volunteer and no pressed man, who could not, under the rules of the service, reply. The effect of it, thanks to the natural depravity of things, was as though Oules had cut the man's coat off his back. Knowing the new draft by reputation, I was fairly certain that every one of them would swear with many oaths that Oules had actually thrashed the man. In that case Oules would do well to pack his trunk. His career as a servant of the Queen in any capacity was ended. The wheel continued, and the men halted and dressed immediately opposite my resting-place, Oules's face was perfectly bloodless. The flanking man was a dark red, and I could see his lips moving in wicked words. He was Ortheris! After seven years' service and three medals, he had been struck by a boy younger than himself! Further, he was my friend and a good man, a proved man, and an Englishman. The shame of the thing made me



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as hot as it made Oules cold, and if Ortheris had slipped in a cartridge and cleared the account at once I should have rejoiced. The fact that Ortheris, of all men, had been struck, proved that the boy could not have known whom he was hitting; but he should have remembered that he was no longer a boy. And then I was sorry for him, and then I was angry again, and Ortheris stared in front of him and grew redder and redder.

The drill halted for a moment. No one knew why, for not three men could have seen the insult, the wheel being end-on to Oules at the time. Then, led I conceived by the hand of Fate, Brander, the captain, crossed the drill-ground, and his eye was caught by not more than a square foot of gray shirt over a shoulder-blade that should have been covered by well-fitting tunic.

"Heavens and Earth!" he said, crossing in three strides. "Do you let your men come on parade in rags, sir? What's that scarecrow doing here? Fall out, that flank-man. What do you mean by—— You, Ortheris, of all men! What the deuce do you mean?"

"Beg y' pardon, sir," said Ortheris. "I scratched it against the guard-gate running up to parade."

"Scratched it! Ripped it up, you mean. It's half off your back."

"It was a little tear at first, sir, but in portin'

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arms it got stretched, sir, an'—an' I can't look behind me. I felt it givin', sir."

"Hm!" said Brander. "I should think you did feel it give. I thought it was one of the new draft. You've a good pair of shoulders. Go on!"

He turned to go. Oules stepped after him, very white, and said something in a low voice.

"Hey, what? What! Ortheris," the voice dropped.

I saw Ortheris salute, say something, and stand at attention.

"Dismiss," said Brander curtly. The men were dismissed. "I can't make this out. You say——?" he nodded at Oules, who said something again. Ortheris stood still, the torn flap of his tunic falling nearly to his waist-belt. He had, as Brander said, a good pair of shoulders, and prided himself on the fit of his tunic.

"Beg y' pardon, sir," I heard him say, "but I think Lieutenant Oules has been in the sun too long. He don't quite remember things, sir. I come on p'rade with a bit of a rip, and it spread, sir, through portin' arms, as I have said, sir."

Brander looked from one face to the other, and I suppose drew his own conclusions, for he told Ortheris to go with the other men who were flocking back to barracks. Then he spoke to Oules and went away, leaving the boy in the middle of the parade-ground fumbling with his sword-knot.

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He looked up, saw me lying on the gun, and came to me biting the back of his gloved forefinger, so completely thrown off his balance that he had not sense enough to keep his trouble to himself.

"I say, you saw that, I suppose?" He jerked his head back to the square, where the dust left by the departing men was settling down in white circles.

"I did," I answered, for I was not feeling polite.

"What the devil ought I to do?" He bit his finger again. "I told Brander what I had done. I hit him."

"I'm perfectly aware of that," I said, "and I don't suppose Ortheris has forgotten it already."

"Ye—es; but I'm dashed if I know what I ought to do. Exchange into another company, I suppose. I can't ask the man to exchange, I suppose. Hey?"

The suggestion showed the glimmerings of proper sense, but he should not have come to me or any one else for help. It was his own affair, and I told him so. He seemed unconvinced, and began to talk of the possibilities of being cashiered. At this point the spirit moved me, on behalf of the unavenged Ortheris, to paint him a beautiful picture of his insignificance in the scheme of creation. He had a papa and a mamma seven thousand miles away, and perhaps

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some friends. They would feel his disgrace, but no one else would care a penny. He would be only Lieutenant Oules of the Old Regiment dismissed the Queen's service for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. The Commander-in-Chief, who would confirm the orders of the court-martial, would not know who he was; his mess would not speak of him; he would return to Bombay, if he had money enough to go home, more alone than when he had come out. Finally, — I rounded the sketch with precision, — he was only one tiny dab of red in the vast gray field of the Indian Empire. He must work this crisis out alone, and no one could help him, and no one cared — (this was untrue, because I cared immensely; he had spoken the truth to Brander on the spot) — whether he pulled through it or did not pull through it. At last his face set and his figure stiffened.

“Thanks, that's quite enough. I don't want to hear any more.” he said in a dry, grating voice, and went to his own quarters.

Brander spoke to me afterwards and asked me some absurd questions as to whether I had seen Oules cut the coat off Ortheris's back. I knew that jagged sliver of silver would do its work well, but I contrived to impress on Brander the completeness, the wonderful completeness of my disassociation from that drill. I began to tell him

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all about my dreams for the new territorial army in India, and he left me.

I could not see Ortheris for some days, but learned that when he returned to his fellows, he had told the story of the blow in vivid language. Samuelson, the Jew, then asserted that it was not good enough to live in a regiment where you were drilled off your feet and knocked about like a dog. The remark was a perfectly innocent one, and exactly tallied with Ortheris's expressed opinions. Yet Ortheris had called Samuelson an unmentionable Jew, had accused him of kicking women on the head in London, and howling under the cat, had hustled him, as a bantam hustles a barn-door cock, from one end of the barrack-room to the other, and finally had heaved every single article in Samuelson's valise and bedding-roll into the verandah and the outer dirt, kicking Samuelson every time that the bewildered creature stooped to pick anything up. My informant could not account for this inconsistency, but it seemed to me that Ortheris was working off his temper.

Mulvaney had heard the story in hospital. First his face clouded, then he spat, and then he laughed. I suggested that he had better return to active duty, but he saw it in another light, and told me that Ortheris was quite capable of looking after himself and his own affairs. "An' if I did come out,"

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said Terence, "like as not I would be catchin' young Oules by the scruff av his trousies an' makin' an example av him before the men. Whin Dinah came back I would be under coort-martial, an' all for the sake av a little bit av a bhoy that'll make an' orf'cer yet. What's he goin' to do, Sorr, do ye know?"

"Which?" said I.

"Oules, av coorse. I've no fear for the *man*. Begad, tho', if ut had come to me — but ut cud not have so come — I'd ha' made him cut his wisdom-teeth on his own sword-hilt."

"I don't think he knows himself what he means to do," I said.

"I should not wonder," said Terence. "There's a dale av thinkin' before a young man whin he's done wrong an' knows ut, an' is studyin' how to put ut right. Give the word from me to our little man there, that if he had ha' told on his shuparior orf'cer I'd ha' come out to Fort Amara to kick him into the Fort Ditch — an' that's a forty-fut drop."

Ortheris was not in good condition to talk to. He wandered up and down with Learoyd, brooding, so far as I could see, over his lost honour, and using, as I could hear, incendiary language. Learoyd would nod and spit and smoke and nod again, and he must have been a great comfort to Ortheris — almost as great a comfort as Samuel-

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son, whom Ortheris bullied disgracefully. If the Jew opened his mouth in the most casual remark, Ortheris would plunge down it with all arms and accoutrements, while the barrack-room stared and wondered.

Ouless had retired into himself to meditate. I saw him now and again, and he avoided me because I had witnessed his shame and spoken my mind on it. He seemed dull and moody, and found his half-company anything but pleasant to drill. The men did their work and gave him very little trouble, but just when they should have been feeling their feet, and showing that they felt them by spring and swing and snap, the elasticity died out, and it was only drilling with war-game blocks. There is a beautiful little ripple in a well-made line of men, exactly like the play of a perfectly tempered sword. Ouless's half-company moved as a broomstick moves, and would have broken as easily.

I was speculating whether Ouless had sent money to Ortheris, which would have been bad, or had apologised to him in private, which would have been worse, or had decided to let the whole affair slide, which would have been worst of all, when orders came to me to leave the station for a while. I had not spoken directly to Ortheris, for his honour was not my honour, and he was its only guardian, and he would not say anything except bad words.



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I went away, and, from time to time, thought a great deal of that subaltern and that private in Fort Amara, and wondered what would be the upshot of everything.

When I returned it was early spring. B Company had been shifted from the Fort to regular duty in cantonments, the roses were getting ready to bud on the Mall, and the regiment, which had been at a camp of exercise among other things was going through its spring musketry-course under an adjutant who had a notion that its shooting-average was low. He had stirred up the company-officers and they had bought extra ammunition for their men—the Government allowance is just sufficient to foul the rifling—and E Company, which counted many marksmen, was vapouring and offering to challenge all the other companies, and the third-class shots were very sorry that they had ever been born, and all the subalterns were a rich, ripe saddle-colour from sitting at the butts six or eight hours a day.

I went off to the butts after breakfast, very full of curiosity to see how the new draft had come forward. Oules was there with his men by the bald hillock that marks the six hundred yards range, and the men were in gray-green *kbaki*, that shows the best points of a soldier and shades off into every background he may stand against. Before I was in hearing-distance I could see, as they

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sprawled on the dusty grass, or stood up and shook themselves, that they were men made over again — wearing their helmets with the cock of self-possession, swinging easily, and jumping to the word of command. Coming nearer, I heard Ouless whistling “Ballyhooley” between his teeth as he looked down the range with his binoculars, and the back of Lieutenant Ouless was the back of a free man and an officer. He nodded as I came up, and I heard him fling an order to a non-commissioned officer in a sure and certain voice. The flag ran up from the target, and Ortheris flung himself down on his stomach to put in his ten shots. He winked at me over the breech-block as he settled himself, with the air of a man who has to go through tricks for the benefit of children.

“Watch, you men,” said Ouless to the squad behind. “He’s half your weight, Brannigan, but he isn’t afraid of his rifle.”

Ortheris had his little affectations and pet ways as the rest of us have. He weighed his rifle, gave it a little kick-up, cuddled down again, and fired across the ground that was beginning to dance in the sun-heat.

“Miss!” said a man behind.

“Too much bloomin’ background in front,” Ortheris muttered.

“I should allow two feet for refraction,” said Ouless.

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Ortheris fired again; made his outer, crept in, found the bull and stayed there; the non-commissioned officer pricking off the shots.

"Can't make out 'ow I missed that first," he said, rising, and stepping back to my side, as Learoyd took his place.

"Is it company practice?" I asked.

"No. Only just knockin' about. Oules, 'e's givin' ten rupees for second-class shots. I'm outer it, of course, but I come on to show 'em the proper style o' doin' things. Jock looks like a sea-lion at the Brighton Aquarium sprawlin' an' crawlin' down there, don't 'e? Gawd, what a butt this end of 'im would make!"

"B Company has come up very well," I said.

"They 'ad to. They're none so dusty now, are they? Samuelson even, 'e can shoot sometimes. We're gettin' on as well as can be expected, thank you."

"How do you get on with——?"

"Oh, 'im! Furst-rate! There's nothin' wrong with 'im."

"Was it all settled then?"

"'Asn't Terence told you? I should say it was. 'E's a gentleman, 'e is."

"Let's hear," I said.

O'theris twinkled all over, tucked his rifle across his knees, and repeated, "'E's a gentleman. 'E's an officer too. You saw all that mess in

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Fort 'Ammèrer. 'Twasn't none o' *my* fault, as you can guess. Only some goat in the drill judged it was behaviour or something to play the fool on p'rade. That's why we drilled so bad. When 'e 'it me, I was so took aback I couldn't do nothing, an' when I wished for to knock 'im down the wheel 'ad gone on, an' I was facin' you there lyin' on the guns. After the captain had come up an' was raggin' me about my tunic bein' tore, I saw the young beggar's eye, an' 'fore I could 'elp myself I begun to lie like a good 'un. You 'eard that? It was quite instinkive, but, my! I was in a lather. Then *he* said to the captain, 'I struck 'im!' sez 'e, an' I 'eard Brander whistle, an' then I come out with a new set o' lies all about portin' arms an' 'ow the rip growed, such as you 'eard. I done that too before I knew where I was. Then I give Samuelson what-for in barricks when he was dismissed. You should ha' seen 'is kit by the time I'd finished with it. It was all over the bloomin' Fort! Then me an' Jock went off to Mulvaney in 'orspital, five-mile walk, an' I was hoppin' mad. Oules, 'e knowed it was court-marshal for me if I 'it 'im back — 'e *must* ha' knowed. Well, I sez to Terence, whisperin' under the 'orspital balcony — 'Terence,' sez I, 'what in 'ell am I to do?' I told 'im all about the row same as you saw. Terence 'e whistles like a bloomin' old

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bullfinch up there in 'orspital, an' 'e sez, 'You ain't to blame,' sez 'e. 'Strewth,' sez I, 'd'you suppose I've come 'ere five mile in the sun to take blame?' I sez. 'I want that young beggar's hide took off. I ain't a bloomin' conscript,' I sez. 'I'm a private servin' of the Queen, an' as good a man as 'e is,' I sez, 'for all 'is commission an' 'is airs an' 'is money,' sez I."

"What a fool you were," I interrupted. Ortheris, being neither a menial nor an American, but a free man, had no excuse for yelping.

"That's exactly what Terence said. I wonder you see it the same way so pat if 'e 'asn't been talkin' to you. 'E sez to me — 'You ought to have more sense,' 'e sez, 'at your time of life. What differ do it make to you,' 'e sez, 'whether 'e 'as a commission or no commission? That's none o' your affair. It's between man an' man,' 'e sez, 'if 'e 'eld a general's commission. Moreover,' 'e sez, 'you don't look 'andsome 'oppin' about on your 'ind legs like that. Take him away, Jock.' Then 'e went inside, an' that's all I got outer Terence. Jock, 'e sez as slow as a march in slow time, — 'Stanley,' 'e sez, 'that young beggar didn't go for to 'it you.' 'I don't give a damn whether 'e did or 'e didn't. 'It me 'e did,' I sez. 'Then you've only got to report to Brander,' sez Jock. 'What d'yer take me for?' I sez, as I was so mad I nearly 'it Jock. An' 'e got me by the neck an'

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shoved my 'ead into a bucket o' water in the cook-'ouse, an' then we went back to the Fort, an' I give Samuelson a little more trouble with 'is kit. 'E sez to me, 'I haven't been strook without hittin' back.' 'Well, you're goin' to be now,' I sez, an' I give 'im one or two for 'isself, an' arxed 'im very polite to 'it back, but he didn't. I'd ha' killed 'im if 'e 'ad. That done me a lot o' good.

"Oules 'e didn't make no show for some days,—not till after you was gone; an' I was feelin' sick an' miserable, an' didn't know what I wanted, 'cept to black his little eyes good. I 'oped 'e might send me some money for my tunic. Then I'd ha' 'ad it out with him on p'rade and took my chance. Terence was in 'orspital still, you see, an' 'e wouldn't give me no advice.

"The day after you left, Oules come across me carrying a bucket on fatigue, an' 'e sez to me very quiet, 'Ortheris, you've got to come out shootin' with me,' 'e sez. I felt like to bunging the bucket in 'is eye, but I didn't. I got ready to go instead. Oh, 'e's a gentleman! We went out together, neither sayin' nuthin' to the other till we was well out into the jungle beyond the river with 'igh grass all round,—pretty near that place where I went off my 'ead with you. Then 'e puts his gun down and sez very quietly: 'Ortheris, I struck you on p'rade,' 'e sez. 'Yes, sir,' sez I, 'you did.' 'I've been studying it out by myself,' 'e sez. 'Oh, you



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'ave, 'ave you?' sez I to myself, 'an' a nice time you've been about it, you bun-faced little beggar.' 'Yes, sir?' sez I. 'What made you screen me?' 'e sez. 'I don't know,' I sez, an' no more I did, nor do. 'I can't ask you to exchange,' 'e sez. 'An' I don't want to exchange myself,' sez 'e. 'What's comin' now?' I thinks to myself. 'Yes, sir,' sez I. He looked round at the 'igh grass all about, an' 'e sez to himself more than to me,— 'I've got to go through it alone, by myself!' 'E looked so queer for a minute that, s'elp me, I thought the little beggar was going to pray. Then he turned round again an' 'e sez, 'What do you think yourself?' 'e sez. 'I don't quite see what you mean, sir,' I sez. 'What would you like?' 'e sez. An' I thought for a minute 'e was goin' to give me money, but 'e run 'is 'and up to the top button of 'is shootin'-coat an' loosed it. 'Thank you, sir,' I sez. 'I'd like that very well,' I sez, an' both our coats was off an' put down."

"Hooray!" I shouted incautiously.

"Don't make a noise on the butts," said Oules from the shooting-place. "It puts the men off."

I apologised, and Ortheris went on.

"Our coats was off, an' 'e sez, 'Are you ready?' sez 'e. 'Come on then.' I come on, a bit uncertain at first, but he took me one under the chin that warmed me up. I wanted to mark the little beggar an' I hit high, but he went an' jabbed me



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over the heart like a good one. He wasn't so strong as me, but 'e knew more, an' in about two minutes I calls 'Time.' 'E steps back,—we was in-fightin' then: 'Come on when you're ready,' 'e sez; and when I had my wind I come on again, an' I got 'im one on the nose that painted 'is little aristocratic white shirt for 'im. That fetched 'im, an' I knew it quicker nor light. He come all round me, close-fightin', goin' steady for my heart. I held on all I could an' split 'is ear, but then I began to hiccup, an' the game was up. I come in to feel if I could throw 'im, an' 'e got me one on the mouth that downed me an'—look 'ere!"

Ortheris raised the left corner of his upper lip. An eye-tooth was wanting.

"'E stood over me an' e sez, 'Have you 'ad enough?' 'e sez. 'Thank you, I 'ave,' sez I. He took my 'and an' pulled me up, an' I was pretty shook. 'Now,' 'e sez, 'I'll apologise for 'ittin' you. It was all my fault,' 'e sez, 'an' it wasn't meant for you.' 'I knowed that, sir,' I sez, 'an' there's no need for no apology.' 'Then it's a accident,' 'e sez; 'an' you must let me pay for the coat. Else it'll be stopped out o' your pay.' I wouldn't ha' took the money before, but I did then. 'E give me ten rupees,—enough to pay for a coat twice over, an' we went down to the river to wash our faces, which was well marked. *His* was special. Then he sez to 'imself, sputterin'

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the water out of 'is mouth, 'I wonder if I done right,' 'e sez. 'Yes, sir,' sez I. 'There's no fear about that.' 'It's all well for you,' 'e sez, 'but what about the comp'ny?' 'Beggin' your pardon, sir,' I sez, 'I don't think the comp'ny will give no trouble.' Then we went shootin', an' when we come back I was feelin' as chirpy as a cricket, an' I took an' rolled Samuelson up an' down the verandah, and give out to the comp'ny that the difficulty between me and Lieutenant Oules was satisfactory put a stop to. I told Jock, o' course, an' Terence. Jock didn't say nothing, but Terence 'e sez: 'You're a pair, you two. An', begad, I don't know which was the better man.' There ain't nothin' wrong with Oules. 'E's a gentleman all over, an' 'e's come on as much as B Comp'ny. I lay 'e'd lose 'is commission, tho', if it come out that 'e'd been fightin' with a private. Ho! Ho! Fightin' all an afternoon with a bloomin' private like me! What do you think?" he added, brushing the breech of his rifle.

"I think what the umpires said at the sham fight: both sides deserve great credit. But I wish you'd tell me what made you save him in the first place."

"I was pretty sure that 'e 'adn't meant it for me, though that wouldn't ha' made no difference if 'e'd been copped for it. An' 'e was that young too, it wouldn't ha' been fair. Besides, if I had

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ha' done that I'd ha' missed the fight, and I'd ha' felt bad all my time. Don't you see it that way, sir?"

"It was your right to get him cashiered if you chose," I insisted.

"My right!" Ortheris answered with deep scorn. "My right! I ain't a recruity to go whin-in' about my rights to this an' my rights to that, as if I couldn't look after myself. My rights! 'Strewth A'mighty! I'm a man."

The last squad were finishing their shots in a storm of low-voiced chaff. Oulesse withdrew to a little distance in order to leave the men at ease, and I saw his face in the full sunlight for a moment, before he hitched up his sword, got his men together, and marched them back to barracks. It was all right. The boy was proven.

## MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

'Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back at once,  
For the bullocks are walkin' two by two,  
The *byles* are walkin' two by two,  
The bullocks are walkin' two by two,  
An' the elephants bring the guns !

Ho ! Yuss !

Great — big — long — black — forty-pounder guns :  
Jiggery-jolty to and fro,  
Each as big as a launch in tow —

Blind — dumb — broad-breeched — beggars o' batterin' guns.

*Barrack Room Ballad.*

TOUCHING the truth of this tale there need be no doubt at all, for it was told to me by Mulvaney at the back of the elephant-lines, one warm evening when we were taking the dogs out for exercise. The twelve Government elephants rocked at their pickets outside the big mud-walled stables (one arch, as wide as a bridge-arch, to each restless beast), and the *mabouts* were preparing the evening meal. Now and again some impatient youngster would smell the cooking flour-cakes and squeal; and the naked little children of the elephant-lines would strut down the row shouting

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and commanding silence, or, reaching up, would slap at the eager trunks. Then the elephants feigned to be deeply interested in pouring dust upon their heads, but, so soon as the children passed, the rocking, fidgeting, and muttering broke out again.

The sunset was dying, and the elephants heaved and swayed dead black against the one sheet of rose-red low down in the dusty gray sky. It was at the beginning of the hot weather, just after the troops had changed into their white clothes, so Mulvaney and Ortheris looked like ghosts walking through the dusk. Learoyd had gone off to another barrack to buy sulphur-ointment for his last dog under suspicion of mange, and with delicacy had put his kennel into quarantine at the back of the furnace where they cremate the anthrax cases.

"*You* wouldn't like mange, little woman?" said Ortheris, turning my terrier over on her fat white back with his foot. "You're no end bloomin' partic'lar, you are. 'Oo wouldn't take no notice o' me t'other day 'cause she was goin' 'ome all alone in 'er dorg-cart, eh? Settin' on the box-seat like a bloomin' little tart, you was, Vicy. Now you run along an' make them 'uttees 'oller. Sick 'em, Vicy, loo!"

Elephants loathe little dogs. Vixen barked herself down the pickets, and in a minute all the ele-

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phants were kicking and squealing and clucking together.

"Oh, you soldier-men," said a mahout angrily, "call off your she-dog. She is frightening our elephant-folk."

"Rummy beggars!" said Ortheris meditatively. "Call 'em people, same as if they was. An' they are too. Not so bloomin' rummy when you come to think of it, neither."

Vixen returned yapping to show that she could do it again if she liked, and established herself between Ortheris's knees, smiling a large smile at his lawful dogs who dared not fly at her.

"'Seed the battery this mornin'?" said Ortheris. He meant the newly-arrived elephant-battery; otherwise he would have said simply "guns." Three elephants harnessed tandem go to each gun, and those who have not seen the big forty-pounders of position trundling along in the wake of their gigantic team have yet something to behold. The lead-elephant had behaved very badly on parade; had been cut loose, sent back to the lines in disgrace, and was at that hour squealing and lashing out with his trunk at the end of the line: a picture of blind, bound, bad temper. His mahout, standing clear of the flail-like blows, was trying to soothe him.

"That's the beggar that cut up on p'rade. 'E's *must*," said Ortheris, pointing. "There'll be mur-

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der in the lines soon, and then, per'aps, 'e'll get loose an' we'll 'ave to be turned out to shoot 'im, same as when one o' they native king's elephants musted last June. 'Ope 'e will."

"*Must* be sugared!" said Mulvaney, contemptuously, from his resting-place on a pile of dried bedding. "He's no more than in a powerful bad timper wid bein' put upon. I'd lay my kit he's new to the gun-team, an' by natur' he hates haulin'. Ask the mahout, Sorr."

I hailed the old white-bearded mahout, who was lavishing pet words on his sulky red-eyed charge.

"He is not *musth*," the man replied indignantly; "only his honour has been touched. Is an elephant an ox or a mule that he should tug at a trace? His strength is in his head—Peace, peace, my Lord! It was not *my* fault that they yoked thee this morning!—Only a low-caste elephant will pull a gun, and *he* is a Kumeria of the Doon. It cost a year and the life of a man to break him to burden. They of the Artillery put him in the gun-team because one of their base-born brutes had gone lame. No wonder that he was, and is, wroth."

"Rummy! Most unusual rum," said Ortheris. "Gawd, 'e is in a temper, though! S'pose 'e got loose!"

Mulvaney began to speak, but checked himself, and I asked the mahout what would happen if the heel-chains broke.



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“God knows, who made elephants,” he said simply. “In his now state peradventure he might kill you three, or run at large till his rage abated. He would not kill me, except he were *musth*. Then would he kill me before any one in the world, because he loves me. Such is the custom of the elephant-folk; and the custom of us mahout-people matches it for foolishness. We trust each our own elephant, till our own elephant kills us. Other castes trust women, but we the elephant-folk. I have seen men deal with enraged elephants and live; but never was man yet born of woman that met my lord the elephant in his *musth* and lived to tell of the taming. They are enough bold who meet him angry.”

I translated. Then said Terence: “Ask the heathen if he iver saw a man tame an elephint,—anyways,—a white man.”

“Once,” said the mahout, “I saw a man astride of such a beast in the town of Cawnpore; a bare-headed man, a white man, beating it upon the head with a gun. It was said he was possessed of devils or drunk.”

“Is ut like, think you, he’d be doin’ it sober?” said Mulvaney after interpretation, and the chained elephant roared.

“There’s only one man top of earth that would be the partic’lar kind o’ sorter bloomin’ fool to do it!” said Ortheris. “When was that, Mulvaney?”

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"As the naygur sez, in Cawnpore; an' I was that fool — in the days av my youth. But it came about as naturil as wan thing leads to another, — me an' the elephint, and the elephint and me; an' the fight betune us was the most naturil av all."

"That's just wot it would ha' been," said Ortheris. "Only you must ha' been more than usual full. You done one queer trick with an elephant that I know of: why didn't you never tell us the other one?"

"Bekaze, onless you had heard the naygur here say what he has said spontaneous, you'd ha' called me for a liar, Stanley, my son, an' it would ha' been my juty an' my delight to give you the father an' mother av a beltin'! There's only wan fault about you, little man, an' that's thinking you know all there is in the world, an' a little more. 'Tis a fault that has made away wid a few orficers I've served undher, not to spake av ivry man but two that I iver thried to make into a privit."

"Ho!" said Ortheris with ruffled plumes, "an' 'oo was your two bloomin' little Sir Garnets, eh?"

"Wan was mesilf," said Mulvaney with a grin that darkness could not hide; 'an' — seein' that he's not here there's no harm speakin' av him — t'other was Jock."

"Jock's no more than a 'ayrick in trousers. 'E be'aves *like* one; an' 'e can't 'it one at a 'un-

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dred; 'e was born *on* one, an' s'welp me 'e'll die *under* one for not bein' able to say wot 'e wants in a Christian lingo," said Ortheris, jumping up from the piled fodder only to be swept off his legs. Vixen leaped upon his stomach, and the other dogs followed and sat down there.

"I know what Jock is like," I said. "I want to hear about the elephant, though."

"It's another o' Mulvaney's bloomin' panoramas," said Ortheris, gasping under the dogs. "'Im an' Jock for the 'ole bloomin' British Army! You'll be sayin' you won Waterloo next, — you an' Jock. Garn!"

Neither of us thought it worth while to notice Ortheris. The big gun-elephant threshed and muttered in his chains, giving tongue now and again in crashing trumpet-peals, and to this accompaniment Terence went on: "In the beginnin'," said he, "me bein' what I was, there was a misunderstandin' wid my sergeant that was then. He put his spite on me for various reasons"—

The deep-set eyes twinkled above the glow of the pipe-bowl, and Ortheris grunted, "Another petticoat!"

—"For various an' promiscuous reasons; an' the upshot av ut was that he come into barricks wan afternoon whin I was settlin' my cowlick before goin' walkin', called me a big baboon (which I was not), an' a demoralisin' beggar

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(which I was), an' bid me go on fatigue thin an' there, helpin' shift E. P. tents, fourteen av thim, from the rest-camp. At that, me bein' set on my walk—

“Ah!” from under the dogs, “’e’s a Mormon, Vic. Don’t you ’ave nothin’ to do with ’im, little dorg.”

—“Set on my walk, I tould him a few things that came up in my mind, an’ wan thing led on to another, an’ betune talkin’ I made time for to hit the nose av him so that he’d be no Venus to any woman for a week to come. ’Twas a fine big nose, and well ut paid for a little groomin’. After that I was so well pleased wid my handicraftfulness that I niver raised fist on the gyard that came to take me to Clink. A child might ha’ led me along, for I knew ould Kearney’s nose was ruined. That summer the Ould Rig’mient did not use their own Clink, bekaze the cholera was hangin’ about there like mildew on wet boots, an’ ’twas murder to confine in ut. We borrowed the Clink that belonged to the Holy Christians (the reg’mint that has never seen service yet), and that lay a matter av a mile away, acrost two p’rade-grounds an’ the main road, an’ all the ladies av Cawnpore goin’ out for their afthernoont dhrive. So I moved in the best av society, my shadow dancin’ along forninst me, an’ the gyard as solemn as putty, the bracelets on my wrists, an’ my heart full contint wid the

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notion of Kearney's pro -- pro — proboscium in a shing.

“In the middle av ut all I perceived a gunner-orf'cer in full reg'mintals perusin' down the road, hell for leather, wid his mouth open. He fetched wan would despairin' look on the dog-kyarts an' the polite society av Cawnpore, an' thin he dived like a rabbit into a dhrein by the side av the road.

“‘Bhoys,’ sez I, ‘that orf'cer's dhrunk. ’Tis scand'lus. Let's take him to Clink too.’

“The corp'ril of the gyard made a jump for me, unlocked my stringers, an' he sez: ‘If it comes to runnin', run for your life. If it doesn't, I'll trust your honour. Anyways,’ sez he, ‘come to Clink when you can.’

“Then I behild him runnin' wan way, stuffin' the bracelets in his pocket, they bein' Gov'ment property, and the gyard runnin' another, an' all the dog-kyarts runnin' all ways to wanst, an' me alone lookin' down the red bag av a mouth av an elephint forty-two feet high at the shoulder, tin feet wide, wid tusks as long as the Ochterlony Monument. That was my first reconnaissance. Maybe he was not quite so contagious, nor quite so tall, but I didn't stop to throw out pickuts. Mother av Hiven, how I ran down the road! The baste began to investigate the dhrein wid the gunner-orf'cer in ut; an' that was the makin' av me. I tripped over wan of the rifles that my gyard had

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discarded (onsoldierly blackguards they was !), an' whin I got up I was facin' t'other way about, an' the elephint was huntin' for the gunner-orf'cer. I can see his big fat back yet. Excipit that he didn't dig, he car'ied on for all the world like little Vixen here at a rat-hole. He put his head down (by my sowl, he nearly stood on ut ! ) to shquint down the dhrain; thin he'd grunt, and run round to the other ind in case the orf'cer was gone out by the back door; an' he'd shtuff his trunk down the flue an' get ut filled wid mud, an' blow ut out, an' grunt an' swear! My troth, he swore all Hiven down upon that orf'cer; an' what a commissariat elephint had to do wid a gunner-orf'cer passed me. Me havin' nowhere to go except to Clink, I stud in the road wid the rifle, a Snider an' no amm'nition, philosophisin' upon the rear ind av the animal. All round me, miles and miles, there was howlin' desolation, for ivry human sowl wid two legs, or four for the matther av that, was ambuscadin', an' this ould rapparee stud on his head tuggin' an' gruntin' above the dhrain, his tail shtickin' up to the sky, an' he thryin' to thrumpet through three feet av road-sweepin's up his thrunk. Begad, 'twas wickud to behold!

"Subsequint, he caught sight av me shtandin' alone in the wide, wide world lanin' on the rifle. That dishcomposed him, bekaze he thought I was the gunner-orf'cer got out unbeknownst. He

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looked betune his feet at the dhRAIN, an' he looked at me, an' I sez to myself: 'Terence, me son, you've been watchin' this Noah's ark too long. Run for the life!' Dear knows I wanted to tell him I was only a poor privit on my way to Clink, an' no orf'cer at all, at all; but he put his ears forward av his thick head, an' I rethreated down the road grippin' the rifle, my back as cowl'd as a tombstone, an' the slack av my trousies, where I made sure he'd take hould, crawlin' wid — wid invidjus apprehension.

"I might ha' run till I dhropped, bekaze I was betune the two straight lines av the road, an' a man, or a thousand men for the matther av that, are the like av sheep in keepin' betune right an' left marks."

"Same as canaries," said Ortheris from the darkness. "Draw a line on a bloomin' little board, put their bloomin' little beaks there, stay so for hever an' hever, amen, they will. 'Seed a 'ole reg'ment, I 'ave, walk crabways along the edge of a two-foot water-cut 'stid o' thinkin' to cross it. Men *is* sheep — bloomin' sheep. Go on."

"But I saw his shadow wid the tail av my eye," continued the man of experiences, "an' 'Wheel,' I sez, 'Terence, wheel!' an' I wheeled. 'Tis truth that I cud hear the shparks flyin' from my heels; an' I shpun into the nearest compound, fetched wan jump from the gate to the verandah



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av the house, an' fell over a tribe of naygurs wid a half-caste boy at a desk, all manufacturin' harniss. 'Twas Antonio's Carriage Emporium at Cawnpore. Ye know ut, Sorr?

"Ould Grambags must ha' wheeled abreast wid me, for his thrunk came lickin' into the verandah like a belt in a barrick-room row, before I was in the shop. The naygurs an' the half-caste boy howled an' wint out at the back door, an' I stud lone as Lot's wife among the harniss. A powerful thirsty thing is harniss, by reason av the smell to ut.

"I wint into the back room, nobody bein' there to invite, an' I found a bottle av whisky and a goglet av wather. The first an' the second dhrink I niver noticed, bein' dhry, but the fourth an' the fifth tuk good hould av me, an' I begun to think scornful av elephints. 'Take the upper ground in manoe'vrin', Terence,' I sez; 'an' you'll be a gen'ral yet,' sez I. An' wid that I wint up to the flat mud roof av the house an' looked over the edge av the parapit, threadin' delicate. Ould Barrel-belly was in the compound, walkin' to an' fro, pluckin' a piece av grass here an' a weed there, for all the world like our colonel that is now whin his wife's given him a talkin' down an' he's prom'nadin' to ease his timper. His back was to me, an' by the same token I hiccupped. He checked in his walk, wan ear forward like a deaf ould lady wid an ear-thrumpet, an' his thrunk

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hild out in a kind av fore-reaching hook. Thin he wagged his ear, sayin', 'Do my sinses deceive me?' as plain as print, an' he recomminst promenadin'. Ye know Antonio's compound? 'Twas as full thin as 'tis now av new kyarts and ould kyarts, and second-hand kyarts an' kyarts for hire, — landos, an' b'rooshes, an' brooms, and wag'nettes av ivry description. Thin I hiccupped again, an' he began to study the ground beneath him, his tail whistlin' wid emotion. Thin he lapped his thrunk round the shaft av a wag'nette an' dhrew ut out circumspectuous an' thoughtful. 'He's not there,' he sez, fumblin' in the cushions wid his thrunk. Thin I hiccupped again, an' wid that he lost his patience good an' all, same as this wan in the lines here."

The gun-elephant was breaking into peal after peal of indignant trumpeting, to the disgust of the other animals, who had finished their food and wished to drowse. Between the outcries we could hear him picking restlessly at his ankle-ring.

"As I was sayin'," Mulvaney went on, "he behaved dishgraceful. He let out wid his fore-fut like a steam-hammer, bein' convinced that I was in ambuscade adjacint; an' that wag'nette ran back among the other carriages like a field-gun in charge. Thin he hauled ut out again an' shuk ut, an' by nature it came all to little pieces. Afther that he went sheer damn, slam, dancin',

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lunatic, double-shuffle demented wid the whole of Antonio's shtock for the season. He kicked, an' he straddled, and he stamped, an' he pounded all at wanst; his big bald head bobbin' up an' down solemn as a rigadoon. He tuk a new shiny broom an' kicked ut on wan corner, an' ut opened out like a blossomin' lily; an' he shtuck wan fool-foot through the flure av ut an' a wheel was shpinin' on his tusk. At that he got scared, an', by this an' that, he fair sat down plump among the carriages, an' they pricked 'im wid splinters till he was a boundin' pincushin. In the middle av the mess, whin the kyarts was climbin' wan on top av the other, an' rickochettin' off the mud walls, an' showin' their agility, wid him tearin' their wheels off, I heard the sound av distressful wailin' on the housetops, an' the whole Antonio firm an' fam'ly was cursin' me an' him from the roof next door; me bekaze I'd taken refuge wid them, and he bekaze he was playin' shtep-dances wid the carriages av the aristocracy.

“ ‘Divart his attention,’ sez Antonio, dancin’ on the roof in his big white waistcoat. ‘Divart his attention,’ he sez, ‘or I’ll prosecute you.’ An’ the whole fam’ly shouts, ‘Hit him a kick, mister soldier.’

“ ‘He’s divartin’ himself,’ I sez, for it was just the worth av a man’s life to go down into the compound. But by way av makin’ show I threw the

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whisky-bottle ('twas not full whin I came there) at him. He shpun round from what was left av the last kyart, an' shtuck his head into the verandah not three feet below me. Maybe 'twas the tempt-in'ness av his back or the whisky. Anyways, the next thing I knew was me, wid my hands full av mud an' mortar, all fours on his back, an' the Snider just slidin' off the slope av his head. I grabbed that an' scuffled on his neck, dhruv my knees un-der his big flappin' ears, an' we wint to glory out av that compound wid a shqueal that crawled up my back an' down my belly. Thin I remimbered the Snider, and I grup ut by the muzzle an' hit him on the head. 'Twas most forlorn, like — like tappin' the deck av a throop-ship wid a cane to stop the engines whin you're sea-sick. But I par-severed till I sweated, an' at last from takin' no notice at all he began to grunt. I hit wid the full strength that was in me in those days, an' it might ha' discommoded him. We came back to the p'rade-groun' forty mile an hour, thrumpetin' vainglorious. I niver stopped hammerin' him for a minut; 'twas by way av divartin' him from runnin' undher the trees an' scrapin' me off like a poultice. The p'rade-groun' an' the road was all empty, but the throops was on the roofs av the barracks, an' betune Ould Thrajectory's gruntin' an' mine (for I was winded wid my stone-breakin'), I heard them clappin' an' cheerin'. He was

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growing more confused an' tuk to runnin' in circles.

“‘Begad,’ sez I to myself, ‘there’s dacency in all things, Terence. ’Tis like you’ve shplit his head, and whin you come out av Clink you’ll be put undher stoppages for killin’ a Gov’mint elephint.’ At that I caressed him.”

“‘Ow the devil did you do that? Might as well pat a barrick,” said Ortheris.

“Thried all manner av endearin’ epitaphs, but bein’ more than a little shuk up I disremimbered what the divil would answer to. So, ‘Good dog,’ I sez; ‘Pretty puss,’ sez I; ‘Whoa, mare,’ I sez; an’ at that I fetched him a shtroke av the butt for to conciliate him, and he shtood shtill among the barricks.

“‘Will no one take me off the top av this murderin’ volcano?’ I sez at the top av my shout, an’ I heard a man yellin’, ‘Hould on, faith an’ patience, the other elephints are comin’.’ ‘Mother av Glory,’ I sez, ‘will I rough-ride the whole shtud? Come an’ take me down, ye cowards!’

“Thin a brace av fat she-elephints wid mahouts an’ a commissariat sargint came shuffling round the corner av the barricks; an’ the mahouts was abusin’ Ould Potiphar’s mother an’ blood-kin.

“‘Obsarve my reinforcements,’ I sez. ‘They’re goin’ to take you to Clink, my son;’ an’ the child av calamity put his ears forward an’ swung head-on

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to those females. The pluck av him, afther my oratorio on his brain-pan, wint to the heart av me. 'I'm in dishgrace mesilf,' I sez, 'but I'll do what I can for ye. Will ye go to Clink like a man, or fight like a fool whin there's no chanst?' Wid that I fetched him wan last lick on the head, an' he fetched a tremenjus groan an' dhropped his thrunk. 'Think,' sez I to him, an' 'Halt!' I sez to the mahouts. They was anxious so to do. I could feel the ould reprobit meditating undher me. At last he put his thrunk straight out an' gave a most melancholius toot (the like av a sigh wid an elephint); an' by that I knew the white flag was up an' the rest was no more than considherin' his feelin's.

"'He's done,' I sez. 'Kape open ordher left an' right alongside. We'll go to Clink quiet.'

"Sez the commissariat sergeant to me from his elephint, 'Are you a man or a mericle?' sez he.

"'I'm betwixt an' betune,' I sez, thryin' to set up stiff-back. 'An' what,' sez I, 'may ha' set this animal off in this opprobrious shtyle?' I sez, the gun-butt light an' easy on my hip an' my left hand dhropped, such as throopers behave. We was bowlin' on to the elephint-lines under escort all this time.

"'I was not in the lines whin the throuble began,' sez the sergeant. 'They tuk him off car'yin' tents an' such like, an' put him to the gun-team.

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I knew he would not like ut, but by token ut fair tore his heart out.'

"'Faith, wan man's mate is another's poison,' I sez. 'Twas bein' put on to carry tents that was the ruin av me.' An' my heart warrumed to Ould Double Ends bekaze he had been put upon.

"'We'll close on him here,' sez the sergeant, whin we got to the elephint-lines. All the mahouts an' their childher was round the pickets cursin' my pony from a mile to hear. 'You shkip off on to my elephint's back,' he sez. 'There'll be throuble.'

"'Sind that howlin' crowd away,' I sez, 'or he'll thrample the life out av thim.' I cud feel his ears beginnin' to twitch. 'An' do you an' your immoril she-elephints go well clear away. I will get down here. He's an Irishman,' I sez, 'for all his long Jew's nose, an' he shall be threatad like an Irishman.'

"'Are ye tired av life?' sez the sergeant.

"'Divil a bit,' I sez; 'but wan av us has to win, an' I'm av opinion 'tis me. Get back,' I sez.

"The two elephints wint off, an' Smith O'Brine came to a halt dead above his own pickuts. 'Down,' sez I, whackin' him on the head, an' down he wint, shouldher over shouldher like a hill-side slippin' afther rain. 'Now,' sez I, slidin' down his nose an' runnin' to the front av him, 'you will see the man that's betther than you.'



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“His big head was down betune his big forefeet, an’ they was twisted in sideways like a kitten’s. He looked the picture av innocence an’ forlornsomeness, an’ by this an’ that his big hairy undherlip was thremblin’, and he winked his eyes together to kape from cryin’. ‘For the love av God,’ I sez, clane forgettin’ he was a dumb baste; ‘don’t take ut to heart so! Aisy, be aisy,’ I says; an’ with that I rubbed his cheek an’ betune his eyes an’ the top av his thrunk, talkin’ all the time. ‘Now,’ sez I, ‘I’ll make you comfortable for the night. Send wan or two childher here,’ I sez to the sergeant, who was watchin’ for to see me killed. ‘He’ll rouse at the sight av a man.’”

“You got bloomin’ clever all of a sudden,” said Ortheris. “’Ow did you come to know ’is funny little ways that soon?”

“Bekaze,” said Terence with emphasis, “bekaze I had conquered the beggar, my son.”

“Ho!” said Ortheris between doubt and derision. “G’on.”

“His mahout’s child an’ wan or two other linebabies came runnin’ up, not bein’ afraid av anything, an’ some got wather an’ I washed the top av his poor sore head (begad, I had done him to a turn!), an’ some picked the pieces av carts out av his hide, an’ we scraped him, an’ handled him all over, an’ we put a thunderin’ big poultice av neem-leaves (the same that ye stick on a pony’s

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gall) on his head, an' it looked like a smokin'-cap, an' we put a pile av young sugar-cane forninst him, an' he began to pick at ut. 'Now,' sez I, settin' down on his fore-foot, 'we'll have a dhrink, an' let bygones be.' I sent a naygur-child for a quart av arrack, an' the sergeant's wife she sint me out four fingers av whisky, an' whin the liquor came I cud see by the twinkle in Ould Typhoon's eye that he was no more a stranger to ut than me,—worse luck, than me! So he tuk his quart like a Christian, an' *thin* I put his shackles on, chained him fore an' aft to the pickuts, an' gave him my blessin', an' wint back to barracks."

"And after?" I said in the pause.

"Ye can guess," said Mulvaney. "There was confusion, an' the colonel gave me ten rupees, an' the adj'tant gave me five, an' my comp'ny captain gave me five, an' the men carried me round the barracks shoutin'."

"Did you go to Clink?" said Ortheris.

"I niver heard a word more about the misundherstandin' wid Kearney's beak, if that's what you mane; but sev'ril av the bhoys was tuk off sudden to the Holy Christians' Hotel that night. Small blame to thim,—they had twenty rupees in dhrinks. I wint to lie down an' sleep ut off, for I was as done an' double done as him there in the lines. 'Tis no small thing to go ride elephints.

"Subsequant, me an' the Venerable Father av

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Sin became mighty friendly. I wud go down to the lines, whin I was in dishgrace, an' spend an afthernoon collogin' wid him; he chewin' wan stick av sugar-cane an' me another, as thick as thieves. He'd take all I had out av my pockets an' put ut back again, an' now an' thin I'd bring him beer for his dijistin', an' I'd give him advice about bein' well behaved an' keepin' off the books. Afther that he wint the way av the Army, an' that's bein' thransferred as soon as you've made a good friend."

"So you never saw him again?" I demanded.

"Do you believe the first half av the affair?" said Terence.

"I'll wait till Learoyd comes," I said evasively. Except when he was carefully tutored by the other two and the immediate money-benefit explained, the Yorkshireman did not tell lies; and Terence, I knew, had a profligate imagination.

"There's another part still," said Mulvaney. "Ortheris was in that."

"Then I'll believe it all," I answered, not from any special belief in Ortheris's word, but from desire to learn the rest. He stole a pup from me once when our acquaintance was new, and with the little beast stifling under his overcoat, denied not only the theft, but that he ever was interested in dogs.

"That was at the beginnin' av the Afghan busi-

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ness," said Mulvaney; "years afther the men that had seen me do the thrick was dead or gone home. I came not to shpeak av ut at the last bekaze,—bekaze I do *not* care to knock the face av ivry man that calls me a liar. At the very beginnin' av the marchin' I wint sick like a fool. I had a boot-gall, but I was all for keepin' up wid the rig'mint and such like foolishness. So I finished up wid a hole in my heel that you cud ha' dhruv a tent-peg into. Faith, how often have I preached that to recruits since, for a warnin' to thim to look afther their feet! Our docthor, who knew our business as well as his own, he sez to me, in the middle av the Tangi Pass ut was: 'That's sheer damned carelessness,' sez he. 'How often have I tould you that a marchin' man is no stronger than his feet,—his feet,—his feet!' he sez. 'Now to hospital you go,' he sez, 'for three weeks, an expense to your Quane an' a nuisance to your counthry. Next time,' sez he, 'perhaps you'll put some av the whisky you pour down your throat, an' some av the tallow you put into your hair, into your socks,' sez he. Faith he was a just man! So soon as we come to the head av the Tangi I wint to hospital, hoppin' on wan fut, woid wid disappointment. 'Twas a field-hospital (all flies an' native apothecaries an' liniment) dhropped, in a way av shpeakin', close by the head av the Tangi. The hospital-gyard was ravin' mad wid us sick for keepin' thim

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there, an' we was ravin' mad at bein' kept; an' through the Tangi, day an' night an' night an' day, the fut an' horse an' guns an' commissariat an' tents an' followers av the brigades was pourin' like a coffee-mill. The doolies came dancin' through, scores an' scores av thim, an' they'd turn up the hill to hospital wid their sick, an' I lay in bed nursin' my heel, and hearin' the men bein' tuk out. I remimber wan night (the time I was tuk wid fever) a man came rowlin' through the tents, an', 'Is there any room to die here?' he sez; 'there's none wid the columns'; an' at that he dhropped dead acrost a cot, an' thin the man in ut began to complain against dyin' all alone in the dust undher dead men. Thin I must ha' turned mad wid the fever, an' for a week I was prayin' the saints to stop the noise av the columns movin' through the Tangi. Gun-wheels ut was that wore my head thin. Ye know how 'tis wid fever?"

We nodded; there was no need to explain.

"Gun-wheels an' feet an' people shoutin', but mostly gun-wheels. 'Twas neither night nor day to me for a week. In the mornin' they'd rowl up the tent-flies, and we sick cud look at the Pass an' considher what was comin' next. Horse, fut, or guns, they'd be sure to dhrop wan or two sick wid us, an' we'd get news. Wan mornin' whin the fever hild off av me, I was watchin' the Tangi, an' 'twas just like the picture on the backside av

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the Afghan medal,—men an' elephints an' guns comin' wan at a time crawlin' out of a dhrain."

"It *were* a dhrain," said Ortheris with feeling. "I've fell out an' been sick in the Tangi twice; an' wot turns my innards ain't no bloomin' violets neither."

"The Pass give a twist at the end, so everything shot out suddint, an' they'd built a throop-bridge (mud an' dead mules) over a nullah at the head av ut. I lay an' counted the elephints (gun-elephints) thryin' the bridge wid their thrunks an' rowlin' out sagacious. The fifth elephint's head came round the corner, an' he threw up his thrunk, an' he fetched a toot, an' there he shtuck at the head of the Tangi like a cork in a bottle. 'Faith,' thinks I to mesilf, 'he will not thrust the bridge; there will be throuble.'"

"Trouble! My Gawd!" said Ortheris. "Terence, I was be'ind that bloomin' 'uttee up to my stock in dust. Trouble!"

"Tell on then, little man; I only saw the hospital end av ut." Mulvaney knocked the ashes out of his pipe, as Ortheris heaved the dogs aside and went on.

"We was escort to them guns, three comp'nies of us," he said. "Dewcy was our major, an' our orders was to roll up anything we come across in the Tangi an' shove it out t'other end. Sort o' pop-gun picnic, see? We'd rolled up a lot o'

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lazy beggars o' native followers, an' some commissariat supplies that was bivoo-whackin' for ever seemin'ly, an' all the sweepin's of 'arf a dozen things what ought to 'ave bin at the front weeks ago, an' Dewcy he sez to us: 'You're most 'eart-breakin' sweeps,' 'e sez. 'For 'eving's sake,' sez 'e, 'do a little sweepin' now.' So we swep',—s'welp me, 'ow we did sweep 'em along! There was a full reg'ment be'ind us; most anxious to get on they was; an' they kep' on sendin' to us with the colonel's compliments, and what in 'ell was we stoppin' the way for, please? Oh, they was partic'lar polite! So was Dewcy! 'E sent 'em back wot-for, an' 'e give us wot-for, an' we give the guns wot-for, an' they give the commissariat wot-for, an' the commissariat give first-class extry wot-for to the native followers, an' on we'd go again till we was stuck, an' the 'ole Pass 'ud be swimmin' Allelujah for a mile an' a 'arf. We 'adn't no tempers, nor no seats to our trousies, an' our coats an' our rifles was chucked in the carts, so as we might ha' been cut up any minute, an' we was doin' drover-work. That was wot it was; drovin' on the Islin'ton road!

"I was close up at the 'ead of the column when we saw the end of the Tangi openin' out ahead of us, an' I sez; 'The door's open, boys. 'Oo'll git to the gall'ry fust?' I sez. Then I saw Dewcy screwin' 'is bloomin' eyeglass in 'is eye



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an' lookin' straight on. 'Propped,—*ther* beggar!' he sez; an' the be'ind end o' that bloomin' old 'uttee was shinin' through the dusk like a bloomin' old moon made o' tarpaulin. Then we 'alted, all chock-a-block, one atop o' the other, an' right at the back o' the guns there sails in a lot o' silly grinnin' camels, what the commissariat was in charge of—sailin' away as if they was at the Zoological Gardens an' squeezin' our men most awful. The dust was that up you couldn't see your 'and; an' the more we 'it 'em on the 'ead the more their drivers sez, 'Accha! Accha!' an' by Gawd it was 'at yer' before you knew where you was! An' that 'uttee's be'ind end stuck in the Pass good an' tight, an' no one knew wot for.

"Fust thing we 'ad to do was to fight they bloomin' camels. I wasn't goin' to be eat by no bull-*oont*; so I 'eld up my trousies with one 'and, standin' on a rock, an' 'it away with my belt at every nose I saw bobbin' above me. Then the camels fell back, an' they 'ad to fight to keep the rear-guard an' the native followers from crushin' into them; an' the rear-guard 'ad to send down the Tangi to warn the other reg'ment that we was blocked. I 'eard the mahouts shoutin' in front that the 'uttee wouldn't cross the bridge; an' I saw Dewcy skippin' about through the dust like a musquito worm in a tank. Then our comp'nies got tired o' waitin' an' begun to mark time, an'

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some goat struck up ‘Tommy, make room for your Uncle.’ After *that*, you couldn’t neither see nor breathe nor ‘ear; and there we was, singin’ bloomin’ serenades to the end of a’ elephant that don’t care for tunes! I sung too; I couldn’t do nothin’ else. They was strengthenin’ the bridge in front, all for the sake of the ‘uttee. By an’ by, a’ orf’cer caught me by the throat an’ choked the sing out of me. So I caught the next man I could see by the throat an’ choked the sing out of ‘*im*.”

“What’s the difference between being choked by an officer and being hit?” I asked, remembering a little affair in which Ortheris’s honour had been injured by his lieutenant.

“One’s a bloomin’ lark, an’ one’s a bloomin’ insult!” said Ortheris. “Besides, we was on service, an’ no one cares what an orf’cer does then, s’long as ‘e gets our rations an’ don’t get us unusual cut up. After that we got quiet, an’ I ‘eard Dewcy say that ‘e’d court-martial the lot of us soon as we was out of the Tangi. Then we give three cheers for Dewcy an’ three more for the Tangi; an’ the ‘uttee’s be’ind end was stickin’ in the Pass, so we cheered *that*. Then they said the bridge had been strengthened, an’ we give three cheers for the bridge; but the ‘uttee wouldn’t move a bloomin’ hinch. Not ‘im! Then we cheered ‘im again, an’ Kite Dawson, that was corner-man at all the sing-songs (‘e died on the way down), began to

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give a nigger lecture on the be'ind ends of elephants, an' Dewcy 'e tried to keep 'is face for a minute, but, Lord, you couldn't do such when Kite was playin' the fool an' askin' whether 'e mightn't 'ave leave to rent a villa an' raise 'is orphan children in the Tangi, 'cos 'e couldn't get 'ome no more. Then up come a' orf'cer (mounted like a fool, too) from the reg'ment at the back with some more of his colonel's pretty little compliments, an' what was this delay, please? We sung 'im 'There's another bloomin' row downstairs' till 'is 'orse bolted, an' then we give 'im three cheers; an' Kite Dawson sez 'e was goin' to write to 'The Times' about the awful state o' the streets in Afghanistan. The 'uttee's be'ind end was stickin' in the Pass all the time. At last one o' the mahouts came to Dewcy an' sez something.

“‘Oh, Lord!’ sez Dewcy, ‘I don’t know the beggar’s visiting-list! I’ll give ‘im another ten minutes an’ then I’ll shoot ‘im.’ Things was gettin’ pretty dusty in the Tangi, so we all listened. ‘‘E wants to see a friend,’ sez Dewcy out loud to the men, an’ ‘e mopped ‘is forehead and sat down on a gun-tail.

“I leave it to you to judge ‘ow the reg’ment shouted. ‘That’s all right,’ we sez. ‘Three cheers for Mister Winterbottom’s friend,’ sez we. ‘Why didn’t you say so at fust? Pass the word for old Swizzletail’s wife,’—and such like. Some o’ the

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men they didn't laugh. They took it same as if it might have been a' introduction like, 'cos they knew about 'uttees. Then we all run forward over the guns an' in an' out among the elephants' legs,— Lord, I wonder 'arf the comp'nies wasn't squashed — an' the next thing I saw was Terence 'ere, lookin' like a sheet o' wet paper, comin' down the 'ill-side with a sergeant. ' 'Strewth,' I sez. 'I might ha' knowed 'e'd be at the bottom of any cat's trick,' sez I. Now you tell wot 'appened your end."

"I lay be the same as you did, little man, listenin' to the noises an' the bhoys singin'. Prisently I heard wishperin' an' the doctor sayin', 'Get out av this, wakin' my sick wid your jokes about elephants.' An' another man sez, all angry: ' 'Tis a joke that is stoppin' two thousand men in the Tangi. That son av sin av a haybag av an elephant sez, or the mahouts sez for him, that he wants to see a friend, an' he'll not lift hand or fut till he finds him. I'm wore out wid inthrojucin' sweepers an' coolies to him, an' his hide's as full o' bay'net pricks as a musquito-net av holes, an' I'm here undher ordhers, docthor dear, to ask if any one, sick or well, or alive or dead, knows an elephant. I'm not mad,' he sez, settin' on a box av medical comforts. ' 'Tis my ordhers, an' 'tis my mother,' he sez, 'that would laugh at me for the father av all fools to-day. Does any wan here know an elephant?' We sick was all quiet.

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“‘Now you’ve had your answer,’ sez the docthor. ‘Go away.’

“‘Hould on,’ I sez, thinkin’ mistiways in my cot, an’ I did not know my own voice. ‘I’m by way av bein’ acquaint wid an elephint, mesilf,’ I sez.

“‘That’s delirium,’ sez the docthor. ‘See what you’ve done, sergeant. Lie down, man,’ he sez, seein’ me thryin’ to get up.

“‘’Tis not,’ I sez. ‘I rode him round Cawn-pore barricks. He will not ha’ forgotten. I bruk his head wid a rifle.’

“‘Mad as a coot,’ sez the docthor, an’ thin he felt my head. ‘It’s quare,’ sez he. ‘Man,’ he sez, ‘if you go, d’you know ’twill either kill or cure?’

“‘What do I care?’ sez I. ‘If I’m mad, ’tis betther dead.’

“‘Faith, that’s sound enough,’ sez the docthor. ‘You’ve no fever on you.’

“‘Come on,’ sez the sergeant. ‘We’re all mad to-day, an’ the throops are wantin’ their dinner.’ He put his arm round av me, an’ I came into the sun, the hills an’ the rocks skippin’ big giddy-go-rounds. ‘Seventeen years have I been in the army,’ sez the sergeant, ‘an’ the days av mericles are not done. They’ll be givin’ us more pay next. Begad,’ he sez, ‘the brute knows you!’

“Ould Obstructionist was screamin’ like all pos-

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sist whin I came up, an I heard forty million men up the Tangi shoutin', 'He knows him!' Thin the big thrunk came round me an' I was nigh fainting wid weakness. 'Are you well, Malachi?' I sez, givin' him the name he answered to in the lines. 'Malachi, my son, are you well?' sez I, 'for I am not.' At that he thrumpeted again till the Pass rang to ut, an' the other elephints tuk it up. Thin I got a little strength back. 'Down, Malachi,' I sez, 'an' put me up, but touch me tendher, for I am not good.' He was on his knees in a minut, an' he slung me up as gentle as a girl. 'Go on now, my son,' I sez. 'You're blockin' the road.' He fetched wan more joyous toot, an' swung grand out av the head av the Tangi, his gun-gear clankin' on his back, an' at the back av him there wint the most amazin' shout I iver heard. An' thin I felt my head shpin, an' a mighty sweat bruk out on me, an' Malachi was growin' taller an' taller to me settin' on his back, an' I sez, foolish like an' weak, smilin' all round an' about, 'Take me down,' I sez, 'or I'll fall.'

"The next I remimber was lyin' in my cot again, limp as a chewed rag but cured of the fever, an' the Tangi as empty as the back av my hand. They'd all gone up to the front, an' ten days later I wint up too, havin' blocked an' unblocked an' entire army corps. What do you think av ut, Sorr?"

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"I'll wait till I see Learoyd," I repeated.

"Ah'm here," said a shadow from among the shadows. "Ah've heerd t' tale too."

"Is it true, Jock?"

"Ay; true as t'owd bitch has gotten t' mange. Orth'ris, yo' maun't let t' dawgs hev owt to do wi' her."



## PRIVATE LEAROYD'S STORY

And he told a tale.—*Chronicles of Gautama Buddha.*

FAR from the haunts of Company Officers who insist upon kit-inspections, far from keen-nosed Sergeants who sniff the pipe stuffed into the bedding-roll, two miles from the tumult of the barracks, lies the Trap. It is an old dry well, shadowed by a twisted *pipal* tree and fenced with high grass. Here, in the years gone by, did Private Ortheris establish his dépôt and menagerie for such possessions, dead and living, as could not safely be introduced to the barrack-room. Here were gathered Houdin pullets, and fox-terriers of undoubted pedigree and more than doubtful ownership, for Ortheris was an inveterate poacher and pre-eminent among a regiment of neat-handed dog-stealers.

Never again will the long lazy evenings return wherein Ortheris, whistling softly, moved surgeon-wise among the captives of his craft at the bottom of the well; when Learoyd sat in the niche, giving sage counsel on the management of "tykes," and Mulvaney, from the crook of the overhanging *pipal*, waved his enormous boots in benedic-

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tion above our heads, delighting us with tales of Love and War, and strange experiences of cities and men.

Ortheris — landed at last in the “little stuff bird-shop” for which your soul longed; Learoyd — back again in the smoky, stone-ribbed North, amid the clang of the Bradford looms; Mulvaney — grizzled, tender, and very wise Ulysses, sweltering on the earthwork of a Central India line — judge if I have forgotten old days in the Trap!

Orth'ris, as allus thinks he knaws more than other foaks, said she wasn't a real laady, but nob-but a Hewrasian. I don't gainsay as her culler was a bit doosky like. But she *was* a laady. Why, she rode iv a carriage, an' good 'osses, too, an' her 'air was that oiled as you could see your faice in it, an' she wore dimond rings an' a goold chain, an' silk an' satin dresses as mun 'a' cost a deal, for it isn't a cheap shop as keeps enough o' one pattern to fit a figure like hers. Her name was Mrs. DeSussa, an' t' waay I coom to be acquainted wi' her was along of our Colonel's Laady's dog Rip.

I've seen a vast o' dogs, but Rip was t' prettiest picter of a cliver fox-tarrier 'at iver I set eyes on. He could do owt you like but speek, an' t' Colonel's Laady set more store by him than if he hed been a Christian. She hed bairns of her awn, but

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they was i' England, and Rip seemed to get all t' coodlin' and pettin' as belonged to a bairn by good right.

But Rip were a bit on a rover, an' hed a habit o' breakin' out o' barricks like, and trottin' round t' plaice as if he were t' Cantonment Magistrate coom round inspectin'. The Colonel leathers him once or twice, but Rip didn't care, an' kept on gooin' his rounds, wi' his taail a-waggin' as if he were flag-signallin' to t' world at large 'at he was "gettin' on nicely, thank yo', and how's yo'sen?" An' then t' Colonel, as was noa sort of a hand wi' a dog, tees him oop. A real clipper of a dog, an' it's noa wonder yon laady, Mrs. DeSussa, should tek a fancy tiv him. Theer's one o' t' Ten Commandments says yo' maun't cuvvet your neebor's ox nor his jackass, but it doesn't say nowt about his tarrier dogs, an' happen thot's t' reason why Mrs. DeSussa cuvveted Rip, tho' she went to church reg'lar along wi' her husband, who was so mich darker 'at if he hedn't such a good coaat tiv his back yo' might ha' called him a black man and nut tell a lee nawther. They said he addled his brass i' jute, an' he'd a rare lot on it.

Well, you seen, when they teed Rip up, t' poor awd laa' didn't enjoy very good 'elth. So t' Colonel's Laady sends for me as 'ad a naame for bein' knowledgeable about a dog, an' axes what's ailin' wi' him.

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“Why,” says I, “he’s gotten t’ mopes, an’ what he wants is his libbaty an’ coompany like t’ rest on us; wal happen a rat or two ’ud liven him oop. It’s low, mum,” says I, “is rats, but it’s t’ nature of a dog; an’ soa’s cuttin’ round an’ meetin’ another dog or two an’ passin’ t’ time o’ day, an’ hevvin’ a bit of a turn-up wi’ him like a Christian.”

So she says *her* dog maun’t niver fight an’ noa Christians iver fought.

“Then what’s a soldier for?” says I; an’ I explains to her t’ contrairy qualities of a dog, ’at, when yo’ coom to think on’t, is one o’ t’ curusest things as is. For they larn to behave theirsens like gentlemen born, fit for t’ fost o’ coompany — they tell me t’ Widdy herself is fond of a good dog and knaws one when she sees it as well as onny body: then on t’ other hand a-tewin’ round after cats an’ gettin’ mixed oop i’ all manners o’ blackguardly street-rows, an’ killin’ rats, an’ fightin’ like divils.

T’ Colonel’s Laady says: — “Well, Learoyd, I doan’t agree wi’ you, but you’re right in a way o’ speekin’, an’ I should like yo’ to tek Rip out a-walkin’ wi’ you sometimes; but yo’ maun’t let him fight, nor chase cats, nor do nowt ’orrid”: an’ them was her very wods.

Soa Rip an’ me gooes out a-walkin’ o’ evenin’s, he bein’ a dog as did credit tiv a man, an’ I catches a lot o’ rats an’ we hed a bit of a match on in an

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awd dry swimmin'-bath at back o' t' cantonments, an' it was none so long afore he was as bright as a button again. He hed a way o' flyin' at them big yaller pariah-dogs as if he was a harrow offan a bow, an' though his weight were nowt, he tuk 'em so suddint-like they rolled over like skittles in a halley, an' when they coot he stretched after 'em as if he were rabbit-runnin'. Saame with cats when he cud get t' cat agaate o' runnin'.

One evenin', him an' me was trespassin' ovver a compound wall after one of them mongooses 'at he'd started, an' we was busy grubbin' round a prickle-bush, an' when we looks up there was Mrs. DeSussa wi' a parasel ovver her shoulder, a-watchin' us. "Oh my!" she sings out; "there's that lovelee dog! Would he let me stroke him, Mister Soldier?"

"Ay, he would, mum," sez I, "for he's fond o' laady's coompany. Coom here, Rip, an' speak to this kind laady." An' Rip, seein' 'at t' mon-goose hed gotten clean awaay, cooms up like t' gentleman he was, nivver a hauorth shy or okkord.

"Oh, you beautiful—you prettee dog!" she says, clippin' an' chantin' her speech in a way them sooart has o' their awn; "I would like a dog like you. You are so verree lovelee—so awfuller prettee," an' all thot sort o' talk, 'at a dog o' sense mebbe thinks nowt on, tho' he bides it by reason o' his breedin'.

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An' then I meks him joomp ovver my swagger-cane, an' shek hands, an' beg, an' lie dead, an' a lot o' them tricks as laadies teeaches dogs, though I doan't haud with it mysen, for it's makin' a fool o' a good dog to do such like.

An' at lung length it cooms out 'at she'd been thrawin' sheep's eyes, as t' sayin' is, at Rip for many a day. Yo' see, her childer was grown up, an' she'd nowt mich to do, an' were allus fond of a dog. Soa she axes me if I'd tek somethin' to dhrink. An' we goes into t' drawn-room wheer her 'usband was a-settin'. They meks a gurt fuss ovver t' dog, an' I has a bottle o' aale, an' he gave me a handful o' cigars.

Soa I coomed away, but t' awd lass sings out—"Oh, Mister Soldier, please coom again and bring that prettee dog."

I didn't let on to t' Colonel's Laady about Mrs. DeSussa, an' Rip he says nowt nawther; an' I gooes again, an' ivry time there was a good dhrink an' a handful o' good smooaks. An' I telled t' awd lass a heeap more about Rip than I'd ever heeard: how he tuk t' fost prize at Lunnon dog-show and cost thotty-three pounds fower shillin' from t' man as bred him; 'at his own brother was t' propputty o' t' Prince o' Wailes, an' 'at he had a pedigree as long as a Dook's. An' she lapped it all oop an' were niver tired o' admirin' him. But when t' awd lass took to givin' me money an' I



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seed 'at she were gettin' fair fond about t' dog, I began to suspicion summat. Onny body may give a soldier t' price of a pint in a friendly way an' theer's no 'arm done, but when it cooms to five rupees slipt into your hand, sly like, why, it's what t' 'lectioneerin' fellows calls bribery an' corruption. Specially when Mrs. DeSussa threwed hints how t' cold weather would soon be ovver an' she was goin' to Munsooree Pahar an' we was goin' to Rawalpindi, an' she would niver see Rip any more onless somebody she knowed on would be kind tiv her.

Soa I tells Mulvaaney an' Ortheris all t' taale thro', beginnin' to end.

"'Tis larceny that wicked ould laady manes," says t' Irishman, "'tis felony she is sejuicin' ye into, my frind Learoyd, but I'll purtect your innocence. I'll save ye from the wicked wiles av that wealthy ould woman, an' I'll go wid ye this evenin' and spake to her the wurds av truth an' honesty. But, Jock," says he, waggin' his heead, "'twas not like ye to kape all that good dhrink an' thim fine cigars to yerself, while Orth'ris here an' me have been prowlin' round wid throats as dry as lime-kilns, and nothin' to smoke but Canteen plug. 'Twas a dhirty thrick to play on a comrade, for why should you, Learoyd, be balancin' yoursilf on the butt av a satin chair, as if Terence Mulvaney was not the aquil av anybody who thrades in jute!"



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"Let alone me," sticks in Orth'ris, "but that's like life. Them wot's really fitted to decorate society get no show, while a blunderin' Yorkshireman like you ——"

"Nay," says I, "it's none o' t' blunderin' Yorkshireman she wants; it's Rip. He's t' gentleman this journey."

Soa t' next day, Mulvaaney an' Rip an' me goes to Mrs. DeSussa's, an' t' Irishman being a stranger she wor a bit shy at fust. But yo've heeard Mulvaaney talk, an' yo' may believe as he fairly bewitched t' awd lass wal she let out 'at she wanted to tek Rip away wi' her to Munsooree Pahar. Then Mulvaaney changes his tune an' axes her solemn-like if she'd thought o' t' consequences o' gettin' two poor but honest soldiers sent t' Andamning Islands. Mrs. DeSussa began to cry, so Mulvaaney turns round oppen t' other tack and smooths her down, allowin' 'at Rip ud be a vast better off in t' Hills than down i' Bengal, and 'twas a pity he shouldn't go wheer he was so well beliked. And soa he went on, backin' an' fillin' an' workin' up t' awd lass wal she felt as if her life warn't worth nowt if she didn't hev t' dog.

Then all of a suddint he says:—"But ye *shall* have him, marm, for I've a feelin' heart, not like this could-blooded Yorkshireman; but 'twill cost ye not a penny less than three hundher rupees."

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"Don't yo' believe him, mum," says I; "t' Colonel's Laady wouldn't tek five hundred for him."

"Who said she would?" says Mulvaaney; "it's not buyin' him I mane, but for the sake o' this kind, good laady, I'll do what I never dreamt to do in my life. I'll stale him!"

"Don't say steal," says Mrs. DeSussa; "he shall have the happiest home. Dogs often get lost, you know, and then they stray, an' he likes me and I like him as I niver liked a dog yet, an' I *must* hev him. If I got him at t' last minute I could carry him off to Munsooree Pahar and nobody would niver know."

Now an' again Mulvaaney looked acrost at me, an' though I could mak nowt o' what he was after, I concluded to take his leead.

"Well, mum," I says, "I niver thowt to coom down to dog-stealin', but if my comrade sees how it could be done to oblige a laady like yo'sen, I'm nut t' man to hod back, tho' it's a bad business, I'm thinkin', an' three hundred rupees is a poor set-off again t' chance of them Damning Islands as Mulvaaney talks on."

"I'll mek it three-fifty," says Mrs. DeSussa; "only let me hev t' dog!"

So we let her persuade us, an' she teks Rip's measure theer an' then, an' sent to Hamilton's to order a silver collar again' t' time when he was to

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be her awn, which was to be t' day she set off for Munsooree Pahar.

"Sitha, Mulvaaney," says I, when we was outside, "you're niver goin' to let her hev Rip!"

"An' would ye disappoint a poor ould woman?" says he; "she shall have *a* Rip."

"An' wheer's he to come through?" says I.

"Learoyd, my man," he sings out, "you're a pretty man av your inches an' a good comrade, but your head is made av duff. Isn't our frind Orth'ris a Taxidermist, an' a rale artist wid his nimble white fingers? An' what's a Taxidermist but a man who can thrate shkins? Do ye mind the white dog that belongs to the Canteen Sargint, bad cess to him — he that's lost half his time an' snarlin' the rest? He shall be lost for *good* now; an' do ye mind that he's the very spit in shape an' size av the Colonel's, barrin' that his tail is an inch too long, an' he has none av the colour that divar-sifies the rale Rip. an' his timper is that av his masther an' worse. But twhat is an inch on a dog's tail? An' fwhat to a professional like Orth'ris is a few ringstraked shpots av black, brown, an' white? Nothin' at all, at all."

Then we meets Orth'ris, an' that little man, bein' sharp as a needle, seed his way through t' business in a minute. An' he went to work a-practisin' 'air-dyes the very next day, beginnin' on some white rabbits he had, an' then he dored all Rip's markin's

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on t' back of a white Commissariat bullock, so as to get his 'and in an' be sure of his colours; shadin' off brown into black as nateral as life. If Rip *bed* a fault it was too mich markin', but it was straingly reg'lar, an' Orth'ris settled himself to make a fosterate job on it when he got haud o' t' Canteen Sargint's dog. Theer niver was sich a dog as thot for bad temper, an' it did nut get no better when his tail hed to be fettled an inch an' a half shorter. But they may talk o' theer Royal Academies as they like. *I* niver seed a bit o' animal-paintin' to beat t' copy as Orth'ris made of Rip's marks, wal t' picter itself was snarlin' all t' time an' tryin' to get at Rip standin' theer to be cop'ed as good as goold:

Orth'ris allus hed as mich conceit on himsen as would lift a balloon, an' he wor so pleeased wi' his sham Rip he wor for tekking him to Mrs. DeSussa before she went away. But Mulvaaney an' me stopped thot, knowin' Orth'ris's work, though niver so cliver, was nobbut skin-deep.

An' at last Mrs. DeSussa fixed t' day for startin' to Munsooree Pahar. We was to tek Rip to t' stayshun i' a basket an' hand him ovver just when they was ready to start, an' then she'd give us t' brass — as was agreed upon.

An' my wod! It were high time she were off, for them 'air-dyes upon t' cur's back took a vast of paintin' to keep t' reet culler, tho' Orth'ris spent

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a matter o' seven rupees six annas i' t' best droogist shops i' Calcutta.

An' t' Canteen Sargint was lookin' for 'is dog everywheer; an', wi' bein' tied up, t' beast's timper got waur nor ever.

It wor i' t' evenin' when t' train started thro' Howrah, an' we 'elped Mrs. DeSussa wi' about sixty boxes, an' then we gave her t' basket. Orth'ris, for pride of his work, axed us to let him coom along wi' us, an' he couldn't help liftin' t' lid an' showin' t' cur as he lay coiled oop.

"Oh!" says t' awd lass; "the beautee! How sweet he looks!" An' just then t' beauty snarled an' showed his teeth, so Mulvaaney shuts down t' lid and says: "Ye'll be careful, marm, whin ye tek him out. He's disaccustomed to travelling by t' railway, an' he'll be sure to want his rale mistress an' his friend Learoyd, so ye'll make allowance for his feelings at fost."

She would do all thot an' more for the dear, good Rip, and she would nut oppen t' basket till they were miles away, for fear onny body should recognise him, an' we were real good and kind soldier-men, we were, an' she honds me a bundle o' notes, an' then cooms up a few of her relations an' friends to say good-by — not more than seventy-five there wasn't — an' we cuts away.

What coom to t' three hundred and fifty rupees? Thot's what I can scarcelins tell yo', but

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we melted it—we melted it. It was share an' share alike, for Mulvaaney said: "If Learoyd got hold of Mrs. DeSussa first, sure 'twas I that remimbered the Sargint's dog just in the nick av time, an' Orth'ris was the artist av janius that made a work av art out av that ugly piece av ill-nature. Yet, by way av a thank-offerin' that I was not led into felony by that wicked ould woman, I'll send a thrifle to Father Victor for the poor people he's always beggin' for."

But me an' Orth'ris, he bein' Cockney an' I bein' pretty far north, did nut see it i' t' saame way. We'd gotten t' brass, an' we meaned to keep it. An' soa we did—for a short time.

Noa, noa, we niver heeard a wod more o' t' awd lass. Our rig'mint went to Pindi, an' t' Canteen Sargint he got himself another tyke instead o' t' one 'at got lost so reg'lar, an' was lost for good at last.

END OF PART I





**SOLDIERS THREE AND MILITARY TALES**  
**PART II**



## SOLDIERS THREE

### “LOVE-O’-WOMEN”

A lamentable tale of things  
Done long ago, and ill done.

THE horror, the confusion, and the separation of the murderer from his comrades were all over before I came. There remained only on the barrack-square the blood of man calling from the ground. The hot sun had dried it to a dusky gold-beater-skin film, cracked lozenge-wise by the heat, and as the wind rose each lozenge, rising a little, curled up at the edges as if it were a dumb tongue. Then a heavier gust blew all away down wind in grains of dark-coloured dust. It was too hot to stand in the sunshine before breakfast. The men were all in barracks talking the matter over. A knot of soldiers’ wives stood by one of the entrances to the married quarters, while inside a woman shrieked and raved with wicked filthy words.

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A quiet and well-conducted sergeant had shot down in broad daylight just after early parade one of his own corporals, had then returned to barracks and sat on a cot till the guard came for him. He would, therefore, in due time be handed over to the High Court for trial. Further, but this he could hardly have considered in his scheme of revenge, he would horribly upset my work; for the reporting of the trial would fall on me without a relief. What that trial would be like I knew even to weariness. There would be the rifle carefully uncleaned, with the fouling marks about breech and muzzle, to be sworn to by half a dozen superfluous privates; there would be heat, reeking heat, till the wet pencil slipped sideways between the fingers; and the punkah would swish and the pleaders would jabber in the verandahs, and his Commanding Officer would put in certificates of the prisoner's moral character, while the jury would pant and the summer uniforms of the witnesses would smell of dye and soaps; and some abject barrack-sweeper would lose his head in cross-examination, and the young barrister who always defended soldiers' cases for the credit that they never brought him, would say and do wonderful things, and would then quarrel with me because I had not reported him correctly. At the last, for he surely would not be hanged, I might meet the prisoner again, ruling blank account-forms in the Central

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Jail, and cheer him with the hope of a wardership in the Andamans.

The Indian Penal Code and its interpreters do not treat murder, under any provocation whatever, in a spirit of jest. Sergeant Raines would be very lucky indeed if he got off with seven years, I thought. He had slept the night upon his wrongs, and had killed his man at twenty yards before any talk was possible. That much I knew. Unless, therefore, the case was doctored a little, seven years would be his least; and I fancied it was exceedingly well for Sergeant Raines that he had been liked by his Company.

That same evening — no day is so long as the day of a murder — I met Ortheris with the dogs, and he plunged defiantly into the middle of the matter. “I’ll be one o’ the witnesses,” said he. “I was in the verandah when Mackie came along. ’E come from Mrs. Raines’s quarters. Quigley, Parsons, an’ Trot, they was in the inside verandah, so they couldn’t ’ave ’eard nothing. Sergeant Raines was in the verandah talkin’ to me, an’ Mackie ’e come along acrost the square an’ ’e sez, ‘Well,’ sez ’e, ‘’ave they pushed your ’elmet off yet, Sergeant?’ ’e sez. An’ at that Raines ’e catches ’is breath an’ ’e sez, ‘My Gawd, I can’t stand this!’ sez ’e, an’ ’e picks up my rifle an’ shoots Mackie. See?”

“But what were you doing with your rifle in the outer verandah an hour after parade?”

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“Cleanin’ ’er,” said Ortheris, with the sullen brassy stare that always went with his choice lies.

He might as well have said that he was dancing naked, for at no time did his rifle need hand or rag on her twenty minutes after parade. Still the High Court would not know his routine.

“Are you going to stick to that—on the Book?” I asked.

“Yes. Like a bloomin’ leech.”

“All right, I don’t want to know any more. Only remember that Quigley, Parsons, and Trot couldn’t have been where you say without hearing something; and there’s nearly certain to be a barrack-sweeper who was knocking about the square at the time. There always is.”

“’Twasn’t the sweeper. It was the beastie. ’E’s all right.”

Then I knew that there was going to be some spirited doctoring, and I felt sorry for the Government Advocate who would conduct the prosecution.

When the trial came on I pitied him more, for he was always quick to lose his temper, and made a personal matter of each lost cause. Raines’s young barrister had for once put aside his unslaked and Welling passion for alibis and insanity, had forsworn gymnastics and fireworks, and worked soberly for his client. Mercifully the hot weather was yet young, and there had been no flagrant cases of barrack-shootings up to the time; and the jury

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was a good one, even for an Indian jury, where nine men out of every twelve are accustomed to weighing evidence. Ortheris stood firm and was not shaken by any cross-examination. The one weak point in his tale — the presence of his rifle in the outer verandah — went unchallenged by civilian wisdom, though some of the witnesses could not help smiling. The Government Advocate called for the rope; contending throughout that the murder had been a deliberate one. Time had passed, he argued, for that reflection which comes so naturally to a man whose honour is lost. There was also the Law, ever ready and anxious to right the wrongs of the common soldier if, indeed, wrong had been done. But he doubted much whether there had been any sufficient wrong. Causeless suspicion over-long brooded upon had led, by his theory, to deliberate crime. But his attempts to minimise the motive failed. The most disconnected witness knew — had known for weeks — the causes of offence, and the prisoner, who naturally was the last of all to know, groaned in the dock while he listened. The one question that the trial circled round was whether Raines had fired under sudden and blinding provocation given that very morning, and in the summing up it was clear that Ortheris’s evidence told. He had contrived, most artistically, to suggest that he personally hated the Sergeant, who had come into the



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verandah to give him a talking to for insubordination. In a weak moment the Government Advocate asked one question too many, "Beggin' *your* pardon, sir," Ortheris replied, "'e was callin' me a dam' impudent little lawyer." The Court shook. The jury brought it in a killing, but with every provocation and extenuation known to God or man, and the Judge put his hand to his brow before giving sentence, and the Adam's apple in the prisoner's throat went up and down mercury-pumping before a cyclone.

In consideration of all considerations, from his Commanding Officer's certificate of good conduct to the sure loss of pension, service, and honour, the prisoner would get two years, to be served in India, and — there need be no demonstration in Court. The Government Advocate scowled and picked up his papers; the guard wheeled with a clash, and the prisoner was relaxed to the Secular Arm, and driven to the jail in a broken-down *ticca-gharri*.

His guard and some ten or twelve military witnesses, being less important, were ordered to wait till what was officially called the cool of the evening before marching back to cantonments. They gathered together in one of the deep red brick verandahs of a disused lock-up and congratulated Ortheris, who bore his honours modestly. I sent my work into the office and joined them. Orthe-

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ris watched the Government Advocate driving off to lunch.

“ That’s a nasty little bald-’eaded little butcher, that is,” he said. “ ’E don’t please me. ’E’s got a colley dog wot *do*, though. I’m goin’ up to Murree in a week. That dawg’ll bring fifteen rupees anywheres.”

“ You had better spend it in Masses,” said Terence, unbuckling his belt, for he had been on the prisoner’s guard, standing helmeted and bolt upright for three long hours.

“ Not me,” said Ortheris cheerfully. “ Gawd’ll put it down to B Comp’ny’s barrick damages one o’ these days. You look strapped, Terence.”

“ Faith, I’m not so young as I was. That guard-mountin’ wears on the sole av the fut, and this ”—he sniffed contemptuously at the brick verandah — “ is as hard setting as standin’ ! ”

“ Wait a minute. I’ll get the cushions out of my cart,” I said.

“ ’Strewth — sofies ! We’re going it gay,” said Ortheris, as Terence dropped himself section by section on the leather cushions, saying prettily, “ May you niver want a soft place wheriver you go, an’ power to share ut wid a frind. Another for yourself ? That’s good. It lets me sit long-ways. Stanley, pass me a poipe. Augrrh ! An’ that’s another man gone all to pieces bekaze av a woman. I must ha’ been on forty or fifty prison-

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ers' gyards, first an' last, an' I hate ut new ivry time."

"Let's see. You were on Losson's, Lancey's, Dugard's, and Stebbins's, that I can remember," I said.

"Ay, an' before that an' before that—scores av thim," he answered with a worn smile. "'Tis betther to die than to live for thim, though. Whin Raines comes out—he'll be changin' his kit at the jail now—he'll think that too. He shud ha' shot himself an' the woman by rights, an' made a clean bill av all. Now he's left the woman—she tuk tay wid Dinah Sunday gone last—an' he's left himself. Mackie's the lucky man."

"He's probably getting it hot where he is," I ventured, for I knew something of the dead Corporal's record.

"Be sure av that," said Terence, spitting over the edge of the verandah. "But fwhat he'll get there is light marchin'-ordher to fwhat he'd ha' got here if he'd lived."

"Surely not. He'd have gone on and forgotten like the others."

"Did ye know Mackie well, Sorr?" said Terence.

"He was on the Pattiala guard of honour last winter, and I went out shooting with him in an *ekka* for the day, and I found him rather an amusing man."

## “LOVE-O'-WOMEN”

“Well, he'll ha' got shut av amusemints, excipt turnin' from wan side to the other, these few years to come. I knew Mackie, an' I've seen too many to be mistuk in the muster av wan man. He might ha' gone on an' forgot, as you say, Sorr, but he was a man wid an educashin, an' he used ut for his schames, an' the same educashin, an' talk-in', an' all that made him able to do fwhat he had a mind to wid a woman, that same wud turn back again in the long run an' tear him alive. I can't say fwhat that I mane to say bekaze I don't know how, but Mackie was the spit an' livin' image av a man that I saw march the same march *all but*; an' 'twas worse for him that he did not come by Mackie's ind. Wait while I remimber now. 'Twas fwhin I was in the Black Tyrone, an' he was drafted us from Portsmouth; an' fwhat was his misbegotten name? Larry — Larry Tighe ut was; an' wan of the draft said he was a gentleman ranker, an' Larry tuk an' three parts killed him for saying so. An' he was a big man, an' a strong man, an' a handsome man, an' that tells heavy in practice wid some women, but, takin' thim by an' large, not wid all. Yet 'twas wid all that Larry dealt — *all* — for he 'ud put the comether on any woman that trod the green earth av God, an' he knew ut. Like Mackie that's roastin' now, he knew ut; an' niver did he put the comether on any woman save an' excipt for the black

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shame. 'Tis not me that shud be talkin', dear knows, dear knows, but the most av my mis—misalli'nces was for pure devilry, an' mighty sorry I have been whin harm came; an' time an' again wid a girl, ay, an' a woman too, for the matter av that, whin I have seen by the eyes av her that I was makin' more throuble than I talked, I have hild off an' let be for the sake av the mother that bore me. But Larry, I'm thinkin', he was suckled by a she-devil, for he niver let wan go that came nigh to listen to him. 'Twas his business, as if it might ha' bin sinthry-go. He was a good soldier too. Now there was the Colonel's governess—an' he a privit too!—that was never known in barricks; an' wan av the Major's maids, and she was promised to a man; an' some more outside; an' fwhat ut was amongst us we'll never know till Judgment Day! 'Twas the nature av the baste to put the comether on the best av thim—not the prettiest by any manner av manes—but the like av such woman as you cud lay your hand on the Book an' swear there was niver thought av foolishness in. An' for that very reason, mark you, he was niver caught. He came close to ut wanst or twice, but caught he niver was, an' that cost him more at the ind than the beginnin'. He talked to me more than most, bekaze he tould me, barrin' the accident av my educashin, I'd ha' been the same kind av divil he was. 'An' is ut

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like,' he wud say, houldin' his head high — 'is ut like that I'd iver be thrapped? For fwhat am I when all's said an' done?' he sez. 'A damned privit,' sez he. 'An' is ut like, think you, that thim I know wud be connect wid a privit like me? Number tin thousand four hundred an' sivin,' he sez, grinnin'. I knew by the turn av his spache whin he was not takin' care to talk rough that he was a gentleman ranker.

“ ‘I do not undherstan' ut at all,' I sez; 'but I know,' sez I, 'that the divil looks out av your eyes, an' I'll have no share wid you. A little fun by way av amusemint where 't will do no harm, Larry, is right and fair, but I am mistook if 'tis any amusemint to you,' I sez.

“ ‘You are much mistook,' he sez. 'An' I counsel you not to judge your betters.'

“ ‘My betthers!' I sez. 'God help you, Larry. There's no betther in this. 'Tis all bad, as you will find for yoursilf.'

“ ‘You're not like me,' he says, tossin' his head.

“ ‘Praise the Saints, I am not,' I sez. 'Fwhat I have done I have done an' been crool sorry for. Fwhin your time comes,' sez I, 'ye'll remimber fwhat I say.'

“ ‘An' whin that time comes,' sez he, 'I'll come to you for ghostly consolation, Father Terence,' an' at that he wint off afther some more divil's business — for to get expayrience, ne tould me. He



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was wicked — rank wicked — wicked as all Hell! I'm not construct by nature to go in fear av any man, but, begad, I was afraid av Larry. He'd come in to barricks wid his cap on three hairs, an' lie on his cot and stare at the ceilin', and now an' again he'd fetch a little laugh, the like av a splash in the bottom av a well, an' by that I knew he was schamin' new wickedness, an' I'd be afraid. All this was long an' long ago, but ut hild me straight — for a while.

“I tould you, did I not, Sorr, that I was caressed an' pershuaded to lave the Tyrone on account av a throuble?”

“Something to do with a belt and a man's head, wasn't it?” Terence had never given me the exact facts.

“It was. Faith, ivry time I go on prisoner's gyard in coort I wondher fwby I am not where the pris'ner is. But the man I struk tuk it in fair fight, an' he had the good sinse not to die. Consider now, fwat wud ha' come to the Army if he had! I was entreated to exchange, an' my Commandin' Orf'cer pled wid me. I wint, not to be disobligin', an' Larry tould me he was powerful sorry to lose me, though fwat I'd done to make him sorry I do not know. So to the Ould Rig'mint I came, lavin' Larry to go to the divil his own way, an' niver expectin' to see him again except as a shootin'-case in barricks. . . . Who's



that lavin' the compound ? ” Terence's quick eye had caught sight of a white uniform skulking behind the hedge.

“ The Sergeant's gone visiting,” said a voice.

“ Thin I command here, an' I will have no sneakin' away to the bazar, an' huntin' for you wid a pathrol at midnight. Nalson, for I know ut's you, come back to the verandah.”

Nalson, detected, slunk back to his fellows. There was a grumble that died away in a minute or two, and Terence, turning on the other side, went on:—

“ That was the last I saw av Larry for a while. Exchange is the same as death for not thinkin', an' by token I married Dinah, an' that kept me from remimberin' ould times. Thin we wint up to the Front, an' ut tore my heart in tu to lave Dinah at the Depôt in Pindi. Consequent whin I was at the Front I fought circumspectuous till I warrmed up, an thin I fought double tides. You remimber fwhat I tould you in the gyard-gate av the fight at Silver's Theatre.”

“ Wot's that about Silver's Theayter ! ” said Ortheris quickly, over his shoulder.

“ Nothin', little man. A tale that ye know. As I was sayin', afther that fight us av the Ould Rig'-mint an' the Tyrone was all mixed together takin' shtock av the dead, an' av coorse I wint about to find if there was any man that remimbered me.

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The second man I came acrost — an' how I'd missed him in the fight I do not know — was Larry, an' a fine man he looked, but oulder, by token that he had a call to be. 'Larry,' sez I, 'how is ut wid you?'

"'Ye're callin' the wrong man,' he sez, wid his gentleman's smile; 'Larry has been dead these three years. They call him "Love-o'-Women" now,' he sez. By that I knew the ould divil was in him yet, but the ind av a fight is no time for the beginnin' av confession, so we sat down an' talked av times.

"'They tell me you're a married man,' he sez, puffin' slow at his poipe. 'Are ye happy?'

"'I will be whin I get back to Depôt,' I sez. 'Tis a reconnaissance honeymoon now.'

"'I'm married too,' he sez, puffin' slow an' more slow, an' stopperin' wid his forefinger.

"'Sind you happiness,' I sez. 'That's the best hearin' for a long time.'

"'Are ye av that opinion?' he sez; an' thin he began talkin' av the campaign. The sweat av Silver's Theatre was not dhry upon him, an' he was prayin' for more work. I was well contint to lie and listen to the cook-pot lids.

"'Whin he got up off the ground he shtaggered a little, an' laned over all twisted.

"'Ye've got more than ye bargained for,' I sez. 'Take an inventory, Larry. 'Tis like you're hurt.'

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“He turned round stiff as a ramrod an’ damned the eyes av me up an’ down for an impartinent Irish-faced ape. If that had been in barricks, I’d ha’ stretched him an’ no more said; but ’twas at the Front, an’ afther such a fight as Silver’s Theatre I knew there was no callin’ a man to account for his timpers. He might as well ha’ kissed me. Aftherwards I was well pleased I kept my fistes home. Then our Captain Crook — Cruik-na-bulleen — came up. He’d been talkin’ to the little orf’cer bhoy av the Tyrone. ‘We’re all cut to windystraws,’ he sez, ‘but the Tyrone are damned short for noncoms. Go you over there, Mulvaney, an’ be Deputy-Sergeant, Corp’ral, Lance, an’ everything else ye can lay hands on till I bid you stop.’

“I wint over an’ tuk hould. There was wan sergeant left standin’, an’ they’d pay no heed to him. The remnint was me, an’ ’twas high time I came. Some I talked to, an’ some I did not, but before night the bhoys av the Tyrone stud to attention, begad, if I sucked on my poipe above a whishper. Betune you an’ me an’ Bobs, I was commandin’ the corapany, an’ that was what Cruik had thranferred me for, an’ the little orf’cer bhoy knew ut, and I knew ut, but the comp’ny did not. And *there*, mark you, is the vartue that no money an’ no dhrill can buy — the vartue av the ould soldier that knows his orf’cer’s work an’ does ut — at the salute !

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“Thin the Tyrone, wid the Ould Rig’mint ir touch, was sint maraudin’ and prowlin’ acrost the hills promishcuous an’ unsatisfactory. ’Tis my privit opinion that a gin’ral does not know half his time fwhat to do wid three-quarthers his command. So he shquats on his hunkers an’ bids thim run round an’ round forninst him while he considhers on ut. Whin by the process av nature they get sejuiced into a big fight that was none av their seekin’, he sez: ‘Obsarve my shuparior janius! I meant ut to come so.’ We ran round an’ about, an’ all we got was shootin’ into the camp at night, an’ rushin’ empty *sungars* wid the long bradawl, an’ bein’ hit from behind rocks till we was wore out—all except Love-o’-Women. That puppy-dog business was mate an’ dhrink to him. Begad, he cud niver get enough av ut. Me well knowin’ that it is just this desultorial campaignin’ that kills the best men, an’ suspicionin’ that if I was cut the little orf’cer bhoy wud expind all his men in thryin’ to get out, I wud lie most powerful doggo whin I heard a shot, an’ curl my long legs behind a boulder, an’ run like blazes whin the ground was clear. Faith, if I led the Tyrone in rethreat wanst I led them forty times. Love-o’-Women wud stay pottin’ an’ pottin’ from behind a rock, and wait till the fire was heaviest, an’ thin stand up an’ fire man-height clear. He wud lie out in camp too at night snipin’ at the shadows, for he niver tuk

## “ LOVE-O'-WOMEN ”

a mouthful av slape. My commandin' orf'cer — save his little soul! — cud not see the beauty av my strategims, an' whin the Ould Rig'mint crossed us, an' that was wanst a week, he'd throt off to Cruik, wid his big blue eyes as round as saucers, an' lay an information against me. I heard thim wanst talkin' through the tent-wall, an' I nearly laughed.

“ ‘He runs — runs like a hare,’ sez the little orf'cer bhoy. ‘ ’Tis demoralisin' my men.’ ”

“ ‘Ye damned little fool,’ sez Cruik, laughin'. ‘He's larnin' you your business. Have ye been rushed at night yet?’ ”

“ ‘No,’ sez the child, wishful that he had been.

“ ‘Have you any wounded?’ sez Cruik.

“ ‘No,’ he sez. ‘There was no chanst for that. They follow Mulvaney too quick,’ he sez.

“ ‘Fwhat more do you want, thin?’ sez Cruik. ‘Terence is bloodin' you neat an' handy,’ he sez. ‘He knows fwhat you do not, an' that's that there's a time for ivrything. He'll not lead you wrong,’ he sez, ‘but I'd give a month's pay to larn fwhat he thinks av you.’ ”

“ That kept the babe quiet, but Love-o'-Women was pokin' at me for ivrything I did, an' specially my manœuvres.

“ ‘Mr. Mulvaney,’ he sez wan evenin', very contempshus, ‘you're growin' very *jeldy* wid your feet.

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Among gentlemen,' he sez, 'among gentlemen that's called no pretty name.'

" 'Among privits 'tis different,' I sez. 'Get back to your tent. I'm sergeant here,' I sez.

"There was just enough in the voice av me to tell him he was playin' wid his life betune his teeth. He wint off, an' I noticed that this man that was contempshus set off from the halt wid a shunt as tho' he was bein' kicked behind. That same night there was a Paythan picnic in the hills about, an' firin' into our tents fit to wake the livin' dead. 'Lie down all,' I sez. 'Lie down an' kape still. They'll no more than waste ammunition.'

"I heard a man's feet on the ground, an' thin a 'Tini joinin' in the chorus. I'd been lyin' warm, thinkin' av Dinah an' all, but I crup out wid the bugle for to look round in case there was a rush, an' the 'Tini was flashin' at the fore-ind av the camp, an' the hill near by was fair flickerin' wid long-range fire. Undher the starlight I beheld Love-o'-Women settin' on a rock wid his belt and helmet off. He shouted wanst or twice, an' thin I heard him say: 'They should ha' got the range long ago. Maybe they'll fire at the flash.' Thin he fired again, an' that dhrew a fresh volley, and the long slugs that they chew in their teeth came floppin' among the rocks like tree-toads av a hot night. 'That's better,' sez Love-o'-Women.



## “LOVE-O'-WOMEN”

“Oh Lord, how long, how long!’ he sez, an’ at that he lit a match an’ held ut above his head.

“‘Mad,’ thinks I, ‘mad as a coot,’ an’ I tuk wan stip forward, an’ the nixt I knew was the sole av my boot flappin’ like a cavalry gydon an’ the funny-bone av my toes tinglin’. ’Twas a clane-cut shot—a slug—that niver touched sock or hide, but set me bare-fut on the rocks. At that I tuk Love-o’-Women by the scruff an’ threw him under a boulder, an’ whin I sat down I heard the bullets patterin’ on that good stone.

“‘Ye may dhraw your own wicked fire,’ I sez, shakin’ him, ‘but I’m not goin’ to be kilt too.’

“‘Ye’ve come too soon,’ he sez. ‘Ye’ve come too soon. In another minute they cud not ha’ missed me. Mother av God,’ he sez, ‘fwhy did ye not lave me be? Now ’tis all to do again,’ an’ he hides his face in his hands.

“‘So that’s it,’ I sez, shakin’ him again. ‘That’s the manin’ av your disobeyin’ ordhers.’

“‘I dare not kill meself,’ he sez, rockin’ to and fro. ‘My own hand wud not let me die, and there’s not a bullet this month past wud touch me. I’m to die slow,’ he sez. ‘I’m to die slow. But I’m in hell now,’ he sez, shriekin’ like a wo-man. ‘I’m in hell now!’

“‘God be good to us all,’ I sez, for I saw his face. ‘Will ye tell a man the throuble. If ’tis not murder, maybe we’ll mend it yet.’



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“At that he laughed. ‘D’you remimber fwhat I said in the Tyrone barricks about comin’ to you for ghostly consolation. I have not forgot,’ he sez. ‘That came back, an’ the rest av my time is on me now, Terence. I’ve fought ut off for months an’ months, but the liquor will not bite any more, Terence,’ he sez. ‘I can’t get dhrunk.’

“Thin I knew he spoke the truth about bein’ in hell, for whin liquor does not take hould, the sowl av a man is rotten in him. But me bein’ such as I was, fwhat could I say to him?

“‘Di’monds an’ pearls,’ he begins again. ‘Di’monds and pearls I have thrown away wid both hands — an’ fwhat have I left? Oh, fwhat have I left?’

“He was shakin’ an’ thremblin’ up against my shouldher, an’ the slugs was singin’ overhead, an’ I was wonderin’ whether my little bhoy wud have sinse enough to kape his men quiet through all this firin’.

“‘So long as I did not think,’ sez Love-o’-Women, ‘so long I did not see — I wud not see — but I can now, what I’ve lost. The time an’ the place,’ he sez, ‘an’ the very words I said whin ut pleased me to go off alone to hell. But thin, even thin,’ he sez, wrigglin’ tremenjus, ‘I wud not ha’ been happy. There was too much behind av me. How cud I ha’ believed her sworn oath — me that have bruk mine again an’ again for

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the sport av seein' thim cry. An' there are the others,' he sez. 'Oh, what will I do — what will I do?' He rocked back an' forward again, an' I think he was cryin' like wan av the women he dealt wid.

“The full half av fwhat he said was Brigade Ordhers to me, but from the rest an' the remnint I suspicioned somethin' av his throuble. 'Twas the judgmint av God had grup the heel av him, as I tould him 'twould in the Tyrone barricks. The slugs was singin' over our rock more an' more, an' I sez for to divart him: 'Let bad alone,' I sez. 'They'll be thryin' to rush the camp in a minut'.

“I had no more than said that whin a Paythan man crep' up on his belly wid his knife betune his teeth, not twinty yards from us. Love-o'-Women jumped up an' fetched a yell, an' the man saw him an' ran at him (he'd left his rifle under the rock) wid the knife. Love-o'-Women niver turned a hair, but by the Living Power, for I saw ut, a stone twisted under the Paythan man's feet an' he came down full sprawl, an' his knife wint tinklin' acrost the rocks! 'I tould you I was Cain,' sez Love-o'-Women.' 'Fwhat's the use av killin' him? He's an honest man—by compare.'

“I was not dishputin' about the morils av Paythans that tide, so I dhropped Love-o'-Women's

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butt acrost the man's face, an' 'Hurry into camp,' I sez, 'for this may be the first av a rush.'

"There was no rush afther all, though we waited undher arms to give thim a chanst. The Paythan man must ha' come alone for the mischief, an' afther a while Love-o'-Women wint back to his tint wid that quare lurchin' sind-off in his walk that I cud niver undherstand. Begad, I pitied him, an' the more bekaze he made me think for the rest av the night av the day whin I was confirmed Corp'ril, not actin' Lef'tenant, an' my thoughts was not good.

"Ye can undherstand that afther that night we came to talkin' a dale together, an' bit by bit ut came out fwhat I'd suspicioned. The whole av his carr'in's on an' divilmints had come back on him hard as liquor comes back whin you've been on the dhrink for a wake. All he'd said an' all he'd done, an' only he cud tell how much that was, come back, an' there was niver a minut's peace in his sowl. 'Twas the Horrors widout any cause to see, an' yet, an' yet—fwhat am I talkin' av? He'd ha' taken the Horrors wid thankfulness. Beyon' the repentince av the man, an' that was beyon' the natur av man—awful, awful, to behould!—there was more that was worst than any repentince. Av the scores an' scores that he called over in his mind (an' they were dhrivin' him mad), there was, mark you, wan woman av all, an' she was not his

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wife, that cut him to the quick av his marrow. 'Twas there he said that he'd thrown away di'monds an' pearls past count, an' thin he'd begin again like a blind *byle* in an oil-mill, walkin' round an' round, to considher (him that was beyond all touch av being happy this side hell!) how happy he wud ha' been wid *ber*. The more he considhered, the more he'd consate himself that he'd lost mighty happiness, an' thin he wud work ut all backwards, an' cry that he niver cud ha' been happy anyways.

“ Time an' time an' again in camp, on p'rade, ay, an' in action, I've seen that man shut his eyes an' duck his head as you wud duck to the flicker av a bay'nit. For 'twas thin he tould me that the thought av all he'd missed came an' stud forninst him like red-hot irons. For what he'd done wid the others he was sorry, but he did not care; but this wan woman that I've tould of, by the Hilts av God she made him pay for all the others twice over! Niver did I know that a man cud enjure such tormint widout his heart crackin' in his ribs, an' I have been ”— Terence turned the pipe-stem slowly between his teeth — “ I have been in some black cells. All I iver suffered tho' was not to be talked of alongside av *him* . . . an' what could I do? Paternosters was no more than peas for his sorrow.

“ Evenshually we finished our prom'nade acrost the hills, and thanks to me for the same, there was

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no casualties an' no glory. The campaign was comin' to an ind, an' all the rig'mints was bein' drawn together for to be sint back home. Love-o'-Women was mighty sorry bekaze he had no work to do, an' all his time to think in. I've heard that man talkin' to his belt-plate an' his side-arms while he was soldierin' thim, all to prevint himself from thinkin', an' ivry time he got up afther he had been settin' down or wint on from the halt, he'd start wid that kick an' traverse that I tould you of—his legs sprawlin' all ways to wanst. He wud niver go see the docthor, tho' I tould him to be wise. He'd curse me up an' down for my advice; but I knew he was no more a man to be reckoned wid than the little bhoy was a commandin' orf'cer, so I let his tongue run if it aised him.

“Wan day—'twas on the way back—I was walkin' round camp wid him, an' he stopped an' struck ground wid his right fut three or four times doubtful. ‘Fwhat is ut?’ I sez. ‘Is that ground?’ sez he; an' while I was thinkin' his mind was goin', up comes the docthor, who'd been anato-misin' a dead bullock. Love-o'-Women starts to go on quick, an' lands me a kick on the knee while his legs was gettin' into marchin' ordher.

“‘Hould on there,’ sez the docthor; an' Love-o'-Women's face, that was lined like a gridiron, turns red as brick.

“‘Tention,’ says the docthor; an' Love-o'-

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Women stud so. ‘Now shut your eyes,’ sez the docthor. ‘No, ye must not hould by your comrade.’

“ ‘Tis all up,’ sez Love-o'-Women, trying to smile. ‘I’d fall, docthor, an’ you know ut.’

“ ‘Fall ?’ I sez. ‘Fall at attention wid your eyes shut ! Fwhat do you mane ?’

“ ‘The docthor knows,’ he sez. ‘I’ve hild up as long as I can, but begad I’m glad ’tis all done. But I will die slow,’ he sez, ‘I will die very slow.’

“ I cud see by the docthor’s face that he was mortal sorry for the man, an’ he ordhered him to hospital. We wint back together, an’ I was dumb-struck ; Love-o'-Women was cripplin’ and crumblin’ at ivry step. He walked wid a hand on my shoulder all slued sideways, an’ his right leg swingin’ like a lame camel. Me not knowin’ more than the dead fwhat ailed him, ’twas just as though the docthor’s word had done ut all — as if Love-o'-Women had but been waitin’ for the ordher to let go.

“ In hospital he sez somethin’ to the docthor that I could not catch.

“ ‘Holy shmoke !’ sez the docthor, ‘an’ who are you to be givin’ names to your diseases ? ’Tis ag’in’ all the regulations.’

“ ‘I’ll not be a privit much longer,’ sez Love-o'-Women in his gentleman’s voice, an’ the docthor jumped.



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“ ‘Thrate me as a study, Docthor Lowndes,’ he sez; an’ that was the first time I’d iver heard a docthor called his name.

“ ‘Good-bye, Terence,’ sez Love-o’-Women. ‘Tis a dead man I am widout the pleasure av dyin’. You’ll come an’ set wid me sometimes for the peace av my soul.’

“ Now I had been minded to ask Cruik to take me back to the Ould Rig’mint, for the fightin’ was over, an’ I was wore out wid the ways av the bhoys in the Tyrone; but I shifted my will, an’ hild on, an’ wint to set wid Love-o’-Women in the hospital. As I have said, Sorr, the man bruk all to little pieces undher my hand. How long he had hild up an’ forced himself fit to march I cannot tell, but in hospital but two days later he was such as I hardly knew. I shuk hands wid him, an’ his grip was fair strong, but his hands wint all ways to wanst, an’ he cud not button his tunic.

“ ‘I’ll take long an’ long to die yet,’ he sez, ‘for the ways av sin they’re like interest in the rig’-mintal savin’s-bank — sure, but a damned long time bein’ paid.’

“ The docthor sez to me quiet one day, ‘Has Tighe there anythin’ on his mind?’ he sez. ‘He’s burnin’ himself out.’

“ ‘How shud I know, Sorr?’ I sez, as innocent as putty.

“ ‘They call him Love-o’-Women in the Ty-



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rone, do they not?’ he sez. ‘I was a fool to ask. Be wid him all you can. He’s houldin’ on to your strength.’

“ ‘But fwhat ails him, docthor,’ I sez.

“ ‘They call ut Locomotus attacks us,’ he sez, ‘bekaze,’ sez he, ‘ut attacks us like a locomotive, if ye know fwhat that manes. An’ ut comes,’ sez he, lookin’ at me, ‘ut comes from bein’ called Love-o’-Women.’

“ ‘You’re jokin’, docthor,’ I sez.

“ ‘Jokin’!’ sez he. ‘If iver you feel that you’ve got a felt sole in your boot instead av a Government bull’s-wool, come to me,’ he sez, ‘an’ I’ll show you whether ’tis a joke.’

“You would not belave ut, Sorr, but that an’ seein’ Love-o’-Women overtuk widout warnin’ put the cowl’d fear av attacks us on me so strong that for a week an’ more I was kickin’ my toes against stones an’ stumps for the pleasure av feelin’ them hurt.

“An’ Love-o’-Women lay in the cot (he might have gone down wid the wounded before an’ before, but he asked to stay wid me), and fwhat there was in his mind had full swing at him night an’ day an’ ivry hour av the day an’ the night, an’ he withered like beef rations in a hot sun, an’ his eyes was like owls’ eyes, an’ his hands was mut’nous.

“They was gettin’ the rig’mints away wan by wan, the campaign bein’ inded, but as ushuil they

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was behavin' as if niver a rig'mint had been moved before in the mem'ry av man. Now, fwwhy is that, Sorr? There's fightin' in an' out nine months av the twelve somewhere in the Army. There has been — for years an' years an' years, an' I wud ha' thought they'd begin to get the hang av providin' for throops. But no! Ivry time it's like a girls' school meetin' a big red bull whin they're goin' to church; an' 'Mother av God,' sez the Commissariat an' the railways an' the Barrick-masters, 'fwat will we do now?' The ordhers came to us av the Tyrone an' the Ould Rig'mint an' half a dozen more to go down, and there the ordhers stopped dumb. We wint down, by the special grace av God — down the Khaiber anyways. There was sick wid us, an' I'm thinkin' that some av them was jolted to death in the doolies, but they was anxious to be kilt so if they cud get to Peshawur alive the sooner. I walked by Love-o'-Women — there was no marchin', an' Love-o'-Women was not in a stew to get on. 'If I'd only ha' died up there!' sez he through the doolie-curtains, an' then he'd twist up his eyes an' duck his head for the thoughts that came to him.

"Dinah was in Depôt at Pindi, but I wint circumspetuous, for well I knew 'tis just at the rump-ind av all things that his luck turns on a man. By token I had seen a dhriver of a batthery goin' by at a trot singin' 'Home, swate

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home’ at the top av his shout, and takin’ no heed to his bridle-hand — I had seen that man dhrop under the gun in the middle of a word, and come out by the limber like — like a frog on a pave-stone. No. I wud *not* hurry, though, God knows, my heart was all in Pindi. Love-o’-Women saw fwhat was in my mind, an’ ‘Go on, Terence,’ he sez, ‘I know fwhat’s waitin’ for you.’ ‘I will not,’ I sez. ‘’Twill kape a little yet.’

“Ye know the turn of the pass forninst Jumrood and the nine mile road on the flat to Peshawur? All Peshawur was along that road day and night waitin’ for frinds—men, women, childer, and bands. Some av the throops was camped round Jumrood, an’ some went on to Peshawur to get away down to their cantonmints. We came through in the early mornin’, havin’ been awake the night through, and we dhruv sheer into the middle av the mess. Mother av Glory, will I ever forget that comin’ back? The light was not fair lifted, and the furst we heard was ‘For ’tis my delight av a shiny night,’ frum a band that thought we was the second four comp’nies av the Lincolnshire. At that we was forced to sind them a yell to say who we was, an’ thin up wint ‘The wearin’ av the Green.’ It made me crawl all up my backbone, not havin’ taken my brequist. Thin, right smash into our rear, came fwhat was left av the Jock Elliotts — wid

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four pipers an' not half a kilt among thim, playin' for the dear life, an' swingin' their rumps like buck rabbits, an' a native rig'mint shrieking blue murder. Ye niver heard the like. There was men cryin' like women that did — an' faith I do not blame thim. Fwhat bruk me down was the Lancers' Band — shinin' an' spick like angels, wid the ould dhrum-horse at the head an' the silver kettle-dhrums an' all an' all, waitin' for their men that was behind us. They shtruck up the Cavalry Canter, an', begad, those poor ghosts that had not a sound fut in a throop they answered to ut, the men rockin' in their saddles. We thried to cheer them as they wint by, but ut came out like a big gruntin' cough, so there must have been many that was feelin' like me. Oh, but I'm forgettin'! The Fly-by-Nights was waitin' for their second battalion, an' whin ut came out, there was the Colonel's horse led at the head — saddle-empty. The men fair worshipped him, an' he'd died at Ali Musjid on the road down. They waited till the remnint av the battalion was up, and thin — clane against ordhers, for who wanted *that* chune that day? — they wint back to Peshawur slow-time an' tearin' the bowils out av ivry man that heard, wid 'The Dead March.' Right across our line they wint, an' ye know their uniforms are as black as the Sweeps, crawlin' past like the dead, an' the other bands damnin' them to let be.

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“ Little they cared. The carpse was wid them, an' they'd ha' taken ut so through a Coronation. Our ordhers was to go into Peshawur, an' we wint hot-fut past the Fly-by-Nights, not singin', to lave that chune behind us. That was how we tuk the road of the other corps.

“ 'Twas ringin' in my ears still whin I felt in the bones of me that Dinah was comin', an' I heard a shout, an' thin I saw a horse an' a tattoo latherin' down the road, hell to shplit, under women. I knew — I knew! Wan was the Tyrone Colonel's wife — ould Beeker's lady — her gray hair flyin' an' her fat round carkiss rowlin' in the saddle, an' the other was Dinah, that shud ha' been at Pindi. The Colonel's lady she charged at the head av our column like a stone wall, an' she all but knocked Beeker off his horse throwin' her arms round his neck an' blubberin', ‘Me bhoy! me bhoy!’ an' Dinah wheeled left an' came down our flank, an' I let a yell that had suffered inside av me for months, and — Dinah came. Will I iver forget that while I live! She'd come on pass from Pindi, an' the Colonel's lady had lint her the tattoo. They'd been huggin' an' cryin' in each other's arms all the long night.

“ So she walked along wid her hand in mine, askin' forty questions to wanst, an' beggin' me on the Virgin to make oath that there was not a bullet consaled in me, unbeknownst somewhere,

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an' thin I remimbered Love-o'-Women. He was watchin' us, an' his face was like the face av a divil that has been cooked too long. I did not wish Dinah to see ut, for whin a woman's runnin' over wid happiness she's like to be touched, for harm aftherwards, by the laste little thing in life. So I dhrew the curtain, an' Love-o'-Women lay back and groaned.

"Whin we marched into Peshawur, Dinah wint to barracks to wait for me, an' me feelin' so rich that tide, I wint on to take Love-o'-Women to hospital. It was the last I cud do, an' to save him the dust an' the smother I turned the doolie-men down a road well clear av the rest av the throops, an we wint along, me talkin' through the curtains. Av a sudden I heard him say:—

"'Let me look. For the Mercy av Hiven, let me look!' I had been so tuk up wid gettin' him out av the dust and thinkin' of Dinah that I had not kept my eyes about me. There was a woman ridin' a little behind av us, an', talkin' ut over wid Dinah aftherwards, that same woman must ha' rid not far on the Jumrood road. Dinah said that she had been hoverin' like a kite on the left flank av the column.

"I halted the doolie to set the curtains, an' she rode by walkin'-pace, an' Love-o'-Women's eyes wint afther her as if he would fair haul her down from the saddle.



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“ ‘ Follow there,’ was all he sez, but I niver heard a man spake in that voice before or since, an’ I knew by those two wan words an’ the look in his face that she was Di’monds-an’-Pearls that he’d talked av in his distresses.

“ We followed till she turned into the gate av a little house that stud near the Edwardes’s Gate. There was two girls in the verandah, an’ they ran in whin they saw us. Faith, at long eye-range ut did not take me a wink to see fwhat kind av house ut was. The throops bein’ there an’ all, there was three or four such, but aftherwards the polis bade them go. At the verandah Love-o’-Women sez, catchin’ his breath, ‘ Stop here,’ an’ thin, an’ thin, wid a grunt that must ha’ tore the heart up from his stomach, he swung himself out av the doolie, an’ my troth he stud up on his feet wid the sweat pourin’ down his face. If Mackie was to walk in here now I’d be less tuk back than I was thin. Where he’d dhrawn his power from, God knows — or the divil — but ’t was a dead man walkin’ in the sun wid the face av a dead man and the breath av a dead man held up by the Power, an’ the legs an’ the arms of the carps obeyin’ ordhers!

“ The woman stud in the verandah. She’d been a beauty too, though her eyes was sunk in her head, an’ she looked Love-o’-Women up an’ down terrible. ‘ An’,’ she sez, kickin’ back the tail av her



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habit,—‘An’,’ she sez, ‘fwhat are you doin’ *bere*, married man?’

“Love-o’-Women said nothin’, but a little froth came to his lips, an’ he wiped ut off wid his hand an’ looked at her an’ the paint on her, an’ looked, an’ looked, an’ looked.

“‘An’ yet,’ she sez, wid a laugh. (Did you hear Mrs. Raines laugh whin Mackie died? Ye did not? Well for you.) ‘An’ yet,’ she sez, ‘who but you have bettther right,’ sez she. ‘You taught me the road. You showed me the way,’ she sez. ‘Ay, look,’ she sez, ‘for ’tis your work; you that tould me — d’you remimber it? — that a woman who was false to wan man cud be false to two. I have been that,’ she sez, ‘that an’ more, for you always said I was a quick learner, Ellis. Look well,’ she sez, ‘for it is me that you called your wife in the sight av God long since!’ An’ she laughed.

“Love-o’-Women stud still in the sun widout answerin’. Thin he groaned an’ coughed to wanst, an’ I thought ’twas the death-rattle, but he niver tuk his eyes off her face not for a wink. Ye cud ha’ put her eyelashes through the flies av an E. P. tent, they were so long.

“‘Fwhat do you do here?’ she sez, word by word, ‘that have taken away my joy in my man this five years gone — that have broken my rest an’ killed my body an’ damned my soul for the sake av seein’ how ’twas done? Did your expayrience af-

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therwards bring you acrost any woman that gave you more than I did? Wud I not ha' died for you an' wid you, Ellis? Ye know that, man! If ever your lyin' sowl saw truth in uts life ye know that.'

“An' Love-o'-Women lifted up his head and said, 'I knew,' an' that was all. While she was spakin' the Power hild him up parade-set in the sun, an the sweat dhropped undher his helmet. 'Twas more an' more throuble for him to talk, an' his mouth was runnin' twistways.

“‘Fwhat do you do here?’ she sez, an' her voice wint up. 'Twas like bells tollin' before. 'Time was whin you were quick enough wid your words, — you that talked me down to hell. Are ye dumb now?’ An' Love-o'-Women got his tongue, an' sez simple, like a little child, 'May I come in?' he sez.

“‘The house is open day an' night,' she sez, wid a laugh; an' Love-o'-Women ducked his head an' hild up his hand as tho' he was gyardin'. The Power was on him still — it hild him up still, for, by my sowl, as I'll never save ut, he walked up the verandah steps that had been a livin' corpse in hospital for a month!

“‘An' now?’ she sez, lookin' at him; an' the red paint stud lone on the white av her face like a bull's-eye on a target.

“He lifted up his eyes, slow an' very slow, an'

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he looked at her long an' very long, an' he tuk his spache betune his teeth wid a wrench that shuk him.

“ ‘I'm dyin', Aigypt — dyin',’ he sez; ay, those were his words, for I remimber the name he called her. He was turnin' the death-colour, but his eyes niver rowled. They were set — set on her. Wid-out word or warnin' she opened her arms full stretch, an' ‘Here!’ she sez. (Oh, fwhat a golden mericle av a voice ut was!) ‘Die here,’ she sez; an' Love-o'-Women dhropped forward, an' she hild him up, for she was a fine big woman.

“I had no time to turn, bekaze that minut I heard the sowl quit him — tore out in the death-rattle — an' she laid him back in a long chair, an' she sez to me, ‘Misther soldier,’ she sez, ‘will ye not go in an' talk to wan av the girls. This sun's too much for him.’

“Well I knew there was no sun he'd iver see, but I cud not spake, so I wint away wid the empty doolie to find the docthor. He'd been breakfastin' an' lunchin' ever since we'd come in, an' he was as full as a tick.

“ ‘Faith ye've got dhrunk mighty soon,’ he sez, whin I'd tould him, ‘to see that man walk. Barrin' a puff or two av life, he was a corpse before we left Jumrood. I've a great mind,’ he sez, ‘to confine you.’

“ ‘There's a dale av liquor runnin' about, docthor,’ I sez, solemn as a hard-boiled egg. ‘Maybe

## “ LOVE-O'-WOMEN ”

'tis so, but will ye not come an' see the corpse at the house ?'

“ 'Tis dishgraceful,' he sez, 'that I would be expected to go to a place like that. Was she a pretty woman?' he sez, an' at that he set off double quick.

“ I cud see that the two was in the verandah where I'd left them, an' I knew by the hang av her head an' the noise av the crows fwhat had happened. 'Twas the first and the last time that I'd ever known woman to use the pistol. They dread the shot as a rule, but Di'monds-an'-Pearls she did not — she did not.

“ The docthor touched the long black hair av her head ('twas all loose upon Love-o'-Women's chest), an' that cleared the liquor out av him. He stud considherin' a long time, his hands in his pockets, an' at last he sez to me, 'Here's a double death from naturil causes, most naturil causes; an' in the presint state av affairs the rig'mint will be thankful for wan grave the less to dig. *Issiwasti*,' he sez, '*Issiwasti*, Privit Mulvane, these two will be buried together in the Civil Cemet'ry at my expinse, an' may the good God,' he sez, 'make it so much for me whin my time comes. Go to your wife,' he sez; 'go an' be happy. I'll see to this all.'

“ I left him still considherin'. They was buried in the Civil Cemet'ry together, wid a Church of

## SOLDIERS THREE

England service. There was too many buryin's thin to ask questions, an' the docthor—he ran away wid Major—Major Van Dyce's lady that year—he saw to ut all. Fwhat the right an' the wrong av Love-o'-Women an' Di'monds-an'-Pearls was I niver knew, an' I will niver know; but I've tould ut as I came acrost ut—here an' there in little pieces. So, being fwhat I am, an' knowin' fwhat I know, that's fwhy I say in this shootin'-case here, Mackie that's dead an' in hell is the lucky man. There are times, Sorr, whin 'tis betther for the man to die than to live, an' by consequence forty million times betther for the woman."

. . . . .

"H'up there!" said Ortheris. "It's time to go."

The witnesses and guard formed up in the thick white dust of the parched twilight and swung off, marching easy and whistling. Down the road to the green by the church I could hear Ortheris, the black Book-lie still uncleansed on his lips, setting, with a fine sense of the fitness of things, the shrill quick-step that runs—

"Oh, do not despise the advice of the wise,  
Learn wisdom from those that are older,  
And don't try for things that are out of your reach —  
An' that's what the Girl told the Soldier!  
Soldier! soldier!  
Oh, that's what the Girl told the Soldier!"

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

We're goin' 'ome, we're goin' 'ome —  
Our ship is *at* the shore,  
An' you mus' pack your 'aversack,  
For we won't come back no more.  
Ho, don't you grieve for me,  
My lovely Mary Ann,  
For I'll marry you yet on a fourp'ny bit,  
As a time-expired ma-a-an !

*Barrack Room Ballad.*

AN awful thing has happened ! My friend, Private Mulvaney, who went home in the *Serapis*, time-expired, not very long ago, has come back to India as a civilian ! It was all Dinah Shadd's fault. She could not stand the poky little lodgings, and she missed her servant Abdullah more than words could tell. The fact was that the Mulvaney had been out here too long, and had lost touch of England.

Mulvaney knew a contractor on one of the new Central India lines, and wrote to him for some sort of work. The contractor said that if Mulvaney could pay the passage he would give him command of a gang of coolies for old sake's sake. The pay was eighty-five rupees a month, and

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Dinah Shadd said that if Terence did not accept she would make his life a "basted purgathory." Therefore the Mulvaney's came out as "civilians," which was a great and terrible fall; though Mulvaney tried to disguise it by saying that he was "Ker'nel on the railway line, an' a consequinshal man."

He wrote me an invitation, on a tool-indent form, to visit him; and I came down to the funny little "construction" bungalow at the side of the line. Dinah Shadd had planted peas about and about, and nature had spread all manner of green stuff round the place. There was no change in Mulvaney except the change of clothing, which was deplorable, but could not be helped. He was standing upon his trolly, haranguing a gangman, and his shoulders were as well drilled and his big, thick chin was as clean-shaven as ever.

"I'm a civilian now," said Mulvaney. "Cud you tell that I was iver a martial man? Don't answer, Sorr, av you're strainin' betune a complimint an' a lie. There's no houldin' Dinah Shadd now she's got a house av her own. Go inside, an' dhrink tay out av chiny in the drrrrawin'-room, an' thin we'll dhrink like Christians undher the tree here. Scutt, ye naygur-folk! There's a Sahib come to call on me, an' that's more than he'll iver do for you onless you run! Get out, an' go on pilin' up the earth, quick, till sundown."



## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

When we three were comfortably settled under the big *sisbam* in front of the bungalow, and the first rush of questions and answers about Privates Ortheris and Learoyd and old times and places had died away, Mulvaney said, reflectively — "Glory be, there's no p'rade to-morrow, an' no bun-headed Corp'ril-bhoy to give you his lip. An' yit I don't know. 'Tis harrd to be something ye niver were an' niver meant to be, an' all the ould days shut up along wid your papers. Eyah! I'm growin' rusty, an' 'tis the will av God that a man mustn't serve his Quane for time an' all."

He helped himself to a fresh peg, and sighed furiously.

"Let your beard grow, Mulvaney," said I, "and then you won't be troubled with those notions. You'll be a real civilian."

Dinah Shadd had told me in the drawing-room of her desire to coax Mulvaney into letting his beard grow. "'Twas so civilian-like," said poor Dinah, who hated her husband's hankering for his old life.

"Dinah Shadd, you're a dishgrace to an honust, clane-scraped man!" said Mulvaney, without replying to me. "Grow a beard on your own chin, darlint, and lave my razors alone. They're all that stand betune me and dīs-ris-pect-ability. Av I didn't shave, I wud be torminted wid an outrajis thurrst; for there's nothin' so dhryin' to the throat

## SOLDIERS THREE

as a big billy-goat beard waggin' undher the chin. Ye wudn't have me dhrink *always*, Dinah Shadd? By the same token, you're kapin' me crool dhry now. Let me look at that whiskey."

The whiskey was lent and returned, but Dinah Shadd, who had been just as eager as her husband in asking after old friends, rent me with —

"I take shame for you, Sorr, coming down here — though the Saints know you're as welkim as the daylight whin you *do* come — an' upsettin' Terence's head wid your nonsense about — about fwhat's much betther forgotten. He bein' a civilian now, an' you niver was aught else. Can you not let the Arrmy rest? 'Tis not good for Terence."

I took refuge by Mulvaney, for Dinah Shadd has a temper of her own.

"Let be — let be," said Mulvaney. "'Tis only wanst in a way I can talk about the ould days." Then to me: — "Ye say Dhrumshticks is well, an' his lady tu? I niver knew how I liked the gray garron till I was shut av him an' Asia." — "Dhrumshticks" was the nickname of the Colonel commanding Mulvaney's old regiment. — "Will you be seein' him again? You will. Thin tell him" — Mulvaney's eyes began to twinkle — "tell him wid Privit —"

"*Mister*, Terence," interrupted Dinah Shadd.

"Now the Divil an' all his angils an' the Firma-ment av Hiven fly away wid the '*Mister*,' an' the

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

sin av makin' me swear be on your confession, Dinah Shadd! *Privit*, I tell ye. Wid *Privit* Mulvaney's best obedience, that but for me the last time-expired wud be still pullin' hair on their way to the sea."

He threw himself back in the chair, chuckled, and was silent.

"Mrs. Mulvaney," I said, "please take up the whiskey, and don't let him have it until he has told the story."

Dinah Shadd dexterously whipped the bottle away, saying at the same time, "'Tis nothing to be proud av," and thus captured by the enemy, Mulvaney spake:—

"'Twas on Chuseday week. I was behaderin' round wid the gangs on the 'bankmint—I've taught the hoppers how to kape step an' stop screechin'—whin a head-gangman comes up to me, wid about two inches av shirt-tail hanging round his neck an' a disthressful light in his oi. 'Sahib,' sez he, 'there's a reg'mint an' a half av soldiers up at the junction, knockin' red cinders out av ivrything an' ivrybody! They thried to hang me in my cloth,' he sez, 'an' there will be murder an' ruin an' rape in the place before nightfall! They say they're comin' down here to wake us up. What will we do wid our women-folk?'

"'Fetch my throlly!' sez I; 'my heart's sick in my ribs for a wink at anything wid the Quane's

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uniform on ut. Fetch my throlly, an' six av the jildiest men, and run me up in shtyle.'"

"He tuk his best coat," said Dinah Shadd, reproachfully.

"'Twas to do honour to the Widdy. I cud ha' done no less, Dinah Shadd. You and your digresshins interfere wid the coorse av the narrative. Have you iver considhered fwhat I wud look like wid me *head* shaved as well as me chin? You bear that in your mind, Dinah darlin'.

"I was throlled up six miles, all to get a shquint at that draf'. I *knew* 'twas a spring draf' goin' home, for there's no rig'mint hereabouts, more's the pity."

"Praise the Virgin!" murmured Dinah Shadd. But Mulvaney did not hear.

"Whin I was about three-quarters av a mile off the rest-camp, powtherin' along fit to burrst, I heard the noise av the men, an', on my sowl, Sorr, I cud catch the voice av Peg Barney bellowin' like a bison wid the belly-ache. You remimber Peg Barney that was in D Comp'ny—a red, hairy scraun, wid a scar on his jaw? Peg Barney that cleared out the Blue Lights' Jubilee meetin' wid the cook-room mop last year?

"Thin I knew ut was a draf' av the Ould Rig'mint, an' I was conshumed wid sorrow for the bhoys that was in charge. We was harrd scrapin's at any time. Did I iver tell you how Horker Kelley

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

wint into clink nakid as Phœbus Apollonius, wid the shirts av the Corp'ril an' file undher his arrum? An' *he* was a moild man! But I'm digressshin'. 'Tis a shame both to the rig'mints and the Army sendin' down little orf'cer bhoys wid a draf' av strong men mad wid liquor an' the chanst av gettin' shut av India, an' *niver a punishment that's fit to be given right down an' away from cantonmints to the dock!* 'Tis this nonsinse. Whin I am servin' my time, I'm undher the Articles av War, an' can be whipped on the peg for *thim*. But whin I've *served* my time, I'm a Reserve man, an' the Articles av War haven't any hould on me. An orf'cer *can't* do anythin' to a time-expired savin' confinin' him to barricks. 'Tis a wise rig'lation, bekaze a time-expired does *not* have any barricks; bein' on the move all the time. 'Tis a Solomon av a rig'lation, is that. I wud like to be inthroduced to the man that made ut. 'Tis easier to get colts from a Kibbereen horse-fair into Galway than to take a bad draf' over ten miles av counthry. Consi-quintly that rig'lation—for fear that the men wud be hurt by the little orf'cer bhoy. No matther. The nearer my throlly came to the rest-camp, the woilder was the shine, an' the louder was the voice of Peg Barney. 'Tis good I am here,' thinks I to mysilf, 'for Peg alone is employmint for two or three.' He bein', I well knew, as copped as a dhrover.

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“Faith, that rest-camp was a sight! The tent-ropes was all skew-nosed, an’ the pegs looked as dhrunk as the men — fifty av thim — the scourin’s, an’ rinsin’s, an’ Divil’s lavin’s av the Ould Rig’-mint. I tell you, Sorr, they were dhrunker than any men you’ve ever seen in your mortal life. *How* does a draf’ get dhrunk? *How* does a frog get fat? They suk ut in through their shkins.

“There was Peg Barney sittin’ on the groun’ in his shirt — wan shoe off an’ wan shoe on — whackin’ a tent-peg over the head wid his boot, an’ singin’ fit to wake the dead. ’Twas no clane song that he sung, though. ’Twas the Divil’s Mass.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Whin a bad egg is shut av the Army, he sings the Divil’s Mass for a good riddance; an’ that manes swearin’ at ivrything from the Com-mandher-in-Chief down to the Room-Corp’ril, such as you niver in your days heard. Some men can swear so as to make green turf crack! Have you iver heard the Curse in an Orange Lodge? The Divil’s Mass is ten times worse, an’ Peg Barney was singin’ ut, whackin’ the tent-peg on the head wid his boot for each man that he cursed. A powerful big voice had Peg Barney, an’ a hard swearer he was whin sober. I stood forninst him, an’ ’twas not me oi alone that cud tell Peg was dhrunk as a coot.

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF

“‘Good mornin’, Peg,’ I sez, whin he dhrew breath afther cursin’ the Adj’tint-Gen’ral; ‘I’ve put on my best coat to see you, Peg Barney,’ sez I.

“‘Thin take ut off again,’ sez Peg Barney, latherin’ away wid the boot; ‘take ut off an’ dance, ye lousy civilian!’

“Wid that he begins cursin’ ould Dhrumshticks, being so full he clane disremimbers the Brigade-Major an’ the Judge-Advokit-Gen’ral.

“‘Do you not know me, Peg?’ sez I, though me blood was hot in me wid being called a civilian.”

“An’ him a decent married man!” wailed Dinah Shadd.

“‘I do not,’ sez Peg, ‘but dhrunk or sober I’ll tear the hide off your back wid a shovel whin I’ve stopped singin’.’

“‘Say you so, Peg Barney?’ sez I. ‘’Tis clear as mud you’ve forgotten me. I’ll assist your autobiography.’ Wid that I stretched Peg Barney, boot an’ all, an’ wint into the camp. An awful sight ut was!

“‘Where’s the orf’cer in charge av the detachment?’ sez I to Scrub Greene — the manest little worm that ever walked.

“‘There’s no orf’cer, ye ould cook,’ sez Scrub; ‘we’re a bloomin’ Republic.’

“‘Are you that?’ sez I; ‘thin I’m O’Connell



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the Dictator, an' by this you will larn to kape a civil tongue in your rag-box.'

"Wid that I stretched Scrub Greene an' wint to the orf'cer's tent. 'Twas a new little bhoy — not wan I'd iver seen before. He was sittin' in his tent, purtendin' not to 'ave ear av the racket.

"I saluted — but for the life av me I mint to shake hands whin I went in. 'Twas the sword hangin' on the tent-pole changed my will.

"'Can't I help, Sorr?' sez I; 'tis a strong man's job they've given you, an' you'll be wantin' help by sundown.' He was a bhoy wid bowils, that child, an' a rale gintleman.

"'Sit down,' sez he.

"'Not before my orf'cer,' sez I; an' I tould him fwhat my service was.

"'I've heard av you,' sez he. 'You tuk the town av Lungtungpen nakid.'

"'Faith,' thinks I, 'that's Honour an' Glory'; for 'twas Lift'nint Brazenose did that job. 'I'm wid ye, Sorr,' sez I, 'if I'm av use. They shud niver ha' sent you down wid the draf'. Savin' your presince, Sorr,' I sez, 'tis only Lift'nint Hackerston in the Ould Rig'mint can manage a Home draf'.'

"'I've niver had charge of men like this before,' sez he, playin' wid the pens on the table; 'an' I see by the Rig'lations —'

"'Shut your oi to the Rig'lations, Sorr,' I sez,

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'till the throoper's into blue wather. By the Rig'lations you've got to tuck thim up for the night, or they'll be runnin' foul av my coolies an' makin' a shiverarium half through the counthry. Can you trust your noncoms, Sorr?'

" 'Yes,' sez he.

" 'Good,' sez I; 'there'll be throuble before the night. Are you marchin', Sorr?'

" 'To the next station,' sez he.

" 'Betther still,' sez I; 'there'll be big throuble.'

" 'Can't be too hard on a Home draf',' sez he; 'the great thing is to get thim in-ship.'

" 'Faith, you've larnt the half av your lesson, Sorr,' sez I, 'but av you shtick to the Rig'lations you'll niver get thim inship at all, at all. Or there won't be a rag av kit betune thim whin you do.'

" 'Twas a dear little orf'cer bhoy, an' by way av kapin' his heart up, I tould him fwhat I saw wanst in a draf' in Egypt."

" What was that, Mulvaney?" said I.

" Sivin an' fifty men sittin' on the bank av a canal, laughin' at a poor little squidgreen av an orf'cer that they'd made wade into the slush an' pitch the things out av the boats for their Lord High Mightinesses. That made me orf'cer bhoy woild wid indignation.

" 'Soft an' aisy, Sorr,' sez I; 'you've niver had your draf' in hand since you left cantonmints.

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Wait till the night, an' your work will be ready to you. Wid your permission, Sorr, I will investigate the camp, an' talk to me ould frinds. 'Tis no manner av use thryin' to shtop the divilmint *now*.'

"Wid that I wint out into the camp an' intro-juiced mysilf to ivry man sober enough to remimber me. I was some wan in the ould days, an' the bhoys was glad to see me—all excipty Peg Barney wid a eye like a tomata five days in the bazar, an' a nose to match. They come round me an' shuk me, an' I tould thim I was in privit employ wid an income av me own, an' a drrrawin'-room fit to bate the Quane's; an' wid me lies an' me shtories an' nonsinse gin'rally, I kept 'em quiet in wan way an' another, knockin' roun' the camp. 'Twas *bad* even thin whin I was the Angil av Peace.

"I talked to me ould non-coms—*they* was sober—an' betune me an' thim we wore the draf' over into their tents at the proper time. The little orf'cer bhoy he comes round, dacint an' civil-spoken as might be.

"'Rough quarters, men,' sez he, 'but you can't look to be as comfortable as in barricks. We must make the best av things. I've shut my eyes to a dale av dog's thricks to-day, an' now there must be no more av ut.'

"'No more we will. Come an' have a dhrink, me son,' sez Peg Barney, staggerin' where he stud. Me little orf'cer bhoy kep' his timper.

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

“‘You’re a sulky swine, you are,’ sez Peg Barney, an’ at that the men in the tent began to laugh.

“I tould you me orf’cer bhoy had bowils. He cut Peg Barney as near as might be on the oi that I’d squshed whin we first met. Peg wint spinnin’ acrost the tent.

“‘Peg him out, Sorr,’ sez I, in a whisper.

“‘Peg him out!’ sez me orf’cer bhoy, up loud, just as if ’twas battalion p’rade an’ he pickin’ his wurds from the Sargint.

“The non-coms tuk Peg Barney—a howlin’ handful he was—an’ in three minut’s he was pegged out—chin down, tight-dhrawn—on his stummick, a tent-peg to each arm an’ leg, swearin’ fit to turn a naygur white.

“I tuk a peg an’ jammed ut into his ugly jaw.—‘Bite on that, Peg Barney,’ I sez; ‘the night is settin’ frosty, an’ you’ll be wantin’ divarsion before the mornin’. But for the Rig’lations you’d be bitin’ on a bullet now at the thriangles, Peg Barney,’ sez I.

“All the draf’ was out av their tents watchin’ Barney bein’ pegged.

“‘’Tis agin the Rig’lations! He strook him!’ screeches out Scrub Greene, who was always a lawyer; an’ some of the men tuk up the shoutin’.

“‘Peg out that man!’ sez me orf’cer bhoy,

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niver losin' his timper; an' the non-coms wint in and pegged out Scrub Greene by the side av Peg Barney.

"I cud see that the draf' was comin' roun'. The men stud not knowin' fwhat to do.

"'Get to your tents!' sez me orf'cer bhoy. 'Sargint, put a sinthry over these two men.'

"The men wint back into the tents like jackals, an' the rest av the night there was no noise at all excipt the stip av the sinthry over the two, an' Scrub Greene blubberin' like a child. 'Twas a chilly night, an' faith, ut sobered Peg Barney.

"Just before Revelly, me orf'cer bhoy comes out an' sez: 'Loose those men an' send thim to their tents!' Scrub Greene wint away widout a word, but Peg Barney, stiff wid the cowld, stud like a sheep, thryin' to make his orf'cer undherstand he was sorry for playin' the goat.

"There was no tucker in the draf' whin ut fell in for the march, an' divil a wurrd about 'illegality' cud I hear.

"I wint to the ould Colour-Sargint and I sez: — 'Let me die in glory,' sez I. 'I've seen a man this day!'

"'A man he is,' sez ould Hother; 'the draf's as sick as a herrin'. They'll all go down to the sea like lambs. That bhoy has the bowils av a cantonmint av Gin'ral's.'

"'Amin,' sez I, 'an' good luck go wid him,

## THE BIG DRUNK DRAF

wheriver he be, by land or by sea. Let me know how the draf<sup>t</sup> gets clear.'

"An' do you know how they *did*? That bhoy, so I was tould by letter from Bombay, bully-damned 'em down to the dock, till they cudn't call their sowl's their own. From the time they left me oi till they was 'tween decks, not wan av thim was more than dacintly dhrunk. An' by the Holy Articles av War, whin they wint aboard they cheered him till they cudn't spake, an' *that*, mark you, has not come about wid a draf<sup>t</sup> in the mim'ry av livin' man! You look to that little orf'cer bhoy. He has bowils. 'Tis not ivry child that wud chuck the Rig'lations to Flanders an' stretch Peg Barney on a wink from a brokin an' dilapidated ould carkiss like mysilf. I'd be proud to serve ——"

"Terence, you're a civilian," said Dinah Shadd warningly.

"So I am — so I am. Is ut likely I wud forget ut? But he was a gran' bhoy all the same, an' I'm only a mudtipper wid a hod on me shoul-ters. The whiskey's in the heel av your hand, Sorr. Wid your good lave we'll dhrink to the Ould Rig'mint — three fingers — standin' up!"

And we drank.

## THE MUTINY OF THE MAVERICKS

$$\text{Sec. 7.} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Causing} \\ \text{Conspiring} \\ \text{with other} \\ \text{persons to} \\ \text{cause} \end{array} \right\} \text{a mutiny} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{in forces} \\ \text{belonging} \\ \text{to Her} \\ \text{Majesty's} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Regular forces,} \\ \text{Reserve forces,} \\ \text{Auxiliary forces,} \\ \text{Navy.} \end{array} \right.$$

(1)

WHEN three obscure gentlemen in San Francisco argued on insufficient premises they condemned a fellow-creature to a most unpleasant death in a far country which had nothing whatever to do with the United States. They foregathered at the top of a tenement-house in Tehama Street, an unsavoury quarter of the city, and, there calling for certain drinks, they conspired because they were conspirators by trade, officially known as the Third Three of the I. A. A.—an institution for the propagation of pure light, not to be confounded with any others, though it is affiliated to many. The Second Three live in Montreal, and work among the poor there; the First Three have their home in New York, not far from Castle Garden, and write regularly once a week to a small house near one of the big hotels at Boulogne. What happens after that, a particular section of Scotland Yard



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knows too well and laughs at. A conspirator detests ridicule. More men have been stabbed with Lucrezia Borgia daggers and dropped into the Thames for laughing at Head Centres and Triangles than for betraying secrets; for this is human nature.

The Third Three conspired over whiskey cocktails and a clean sheet of note-paper against the British Empire and all that lay therein. This work is very like what men without discernment call politics before a general election. You pick out and discuss, in the company of congenial friends, all the weak points in your opponents' organisation, and unconsciously dwell upon and exaggerate all their mishaps, till it seems to you a miracle that the hated party holds together for an hour.

"Our principle is not so much active demonstration—that we leave to others—as passive embarrassment, to weaken and unnerve," said the first man. "Wherever an organisation is crippled, wherever confusion is thrown into any branch of any department, we gain a step for those who take on the work; we are but the forerunners." He was a German enthusiast, and editor of a newspaper, from whose leading articles he quoted frequently.

"That cursed Empire makes so many blunders of her own that unless we doubled the year's average I guess it wouldn't strike her anything special

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had occurred," said the second man. "Are you prepared to say that all our resources are equal to blowing off the muzzle of a hundred-ton gun or spiking a ten-thousand-ton ship on a plain rock in clear daylight? They can beat us at our own game. Better join hands with the practical branches; we're in funds now. Try a direct scare in a crowded street. They value their greasy hides." He was the drag upon the wheel, and an Americanised Irishman of the second generation, despising his own race and hating the other. He had learned caution.

The third man drank his cocktail and spoke no word. He was the strategist, but unfortunately his knowledge of life was limited. He picked a letter from his breast-pocket and threw it across the table. That epistle to the heathen contained some very concise directions from the First Three in New York. It said —

*"The boom in black iron has already affected the eastern markets, where our agents have been forcing down the English-held stock among the smaller buyers who watch the turn of shares. Any immediate operations, such as western bears, would increase their willingness to unload. This, however, cannot be expected till they see clearly that foreign iron-masters are willing to co-operate. Mulcahy should be dispatched to feel the pulse of the market, and act accordingly. Mavericks are at present the best for our purpose.— P. D. Q."*

## THE MUTINY OF THE MAVERICKS

As a message referring to an iron crisis in Pennsylvania, it was interesting, if not lucid. As a new departure in organized attack on an outlying English dependency, it was more than interesting.

The second man read it through and murmured —

“Already? Surely they are in too great a hurry. All that Dhulip Singh could do in India he has done, down to the distribution of his photographs among the peasantry. Ho! Ho! The Paris firm arranged that, and he has no substantial money backing from the Other Power. Even our agents in India know he hasn’t. What is the use of our organisation wasting men on work that is already done? Of course the Irish regiments in India are half mutinous as they stand.”

This shows how near a lie may come to the truth. An Irish regiment, for just so long as it stands still, is generally a hard handful to control, being reckless and rough. When, however, it is moved in the direction of musketry-firing, it becomes strangely and unpatriotically content with its lot. It has even been heard to cheer the Queen with enthusiasm on these occasions.

But the notion of tampering with the army was, from the point of view of Tehama Street, an altogether sound one. There is no shadow of stability in the policy of an English Government,

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and the most sacred oaths of England would, even if engrossed on vellum, find very few buyers among colonies and dependencies that have suffered from vain beliefs. But there remains to England always her army. That cannot change except in the matter of uniform and equipment. The officers may write to the papers demanding the heads of the Horse Guards in default of cleaner redress for grievances; the men may break loose across a country town and seriously startle the publicans; but neither officers nor men have it in their composition to mutiny after the continental manner. The English people, when they trouble to think about the army at all, are, and with justice, absolutely assured that it is absolutely trustworthy. Imagine for a moment their emotions on realising that such and such a regiment was in open revolt from causes directly due to England's management of Ireland. They would probably send the regiment to the polls forthwith and examine their own consciences as to their duty to Erin; but they would never be easy any more. And it was this vague, unhappy mistrust that the I. A. A. were labouring to produce.

"Sheer waste of breath," said the second man after a pause in the council. "I don't see the use of tampering with their fool-army, but it has been tried before and we must try it again. It looks well in the reports. If we send one man from

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here you may bet your life that other men are going too. Order up Mulcahy."

They ordered him up—a slim, slight, dark-haired young man, devoured with that blind rancorous hatred of England that only reaches its full growth across the Atlantic. He had sucked it from his mother's breast in the little cabin at the back of the northern avenues of New York; he had been taught his rights and his wrongs, in German and Irish, on the canal fronts of Chicago; and San Francisco held men who told him strange and awful things of the great blind power over the seas. Once, when business took him across the Atlantic, he had served in an English regiment, and being insubordinate had suffered extremely. He drew all his ideas of England that were not bred by the cheaper patriotic prints from one iron-fisted colonel and an unbending adjutant. He would go to the mines if need be to teach his gospel. And he went, as his instructions advised, *p. d. q.*—which means "with speed"—to introduce embarrassment into an Irish regiment, "already half-mutinous, quartered among Sikh peasantry, all wearing miniatures of His Highness Dhulip Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab, next their hearts, and all eagerly expecting his arrival." Other information equally valuable was given him by his masters. He was to be cautious, but never to grudge expense in winning the hearts of

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the men in the regiment. His mother in New York would supply funds, and he was to write to her once a month. Life is pleasant for a man who has a mother in New York to send him two hundred pounds a year over and above his regimental pay.

In process of time, thanks to his intimate knowledge of drill and musketry exercise, the excellent Mulcahy, wearing the corporal's stripe, went out in a troopship and joined Her Majesty's Royal Loyal Musketeers, commonly known as the "Mavericks," because they were masterless and unbranded cattle — sons of small farmers in County Clare, shoeless vagabonds of Kerry, herders of Ballyvegan, much wanted "moonlighters" from the bare rainy headlands of the south coast, officered by O'Mores, Bradys, Hills, Kilreas, and the like. Never to outward seeming was there more promising material to work on. The First Three had chosen their regiment well. It feared nothing that moved or talked save the colonel and the regimental Roman Catholic chaplain, the fat Father Dennis, who held the keys of heaven and hell, and blared like an angry bull when he desired to be convincing. Him also it loved because on occasions of stress he was used to tuck up his cassock and charge with the rest into the merriest of the fray, where he always found, good man, that the saints sent him a revolver when there was a fallen private to



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be protected, or — but this came as an afterthought — his own gray head to be guarded.

Cautiously as he had been instructed, tenderly and with much beer, Mulcahy opened his projects to such as he deemed fittest to listen. And these were, one and all, of that quaint, crooked, sweet, profoundly irresponsible and profoundly lovable race that fight like fiends, argue like children, reason like women, obey like men, and jest like their own goblins of the rath through rebellion, loyalty, want, woe, or war. The underground work of a conspiracy is always dull and very much the same the world over. At the end of six months — the seed always falling on good ground — Mulcahy spoke almost explicitly, hinting darkly in the approved fashion at dread powers behind him, and advising nothing more nor less than mutiny. Were they not dogs, evilly treated? had they not all their own and their national revenges to satisfy? Who in these days would daught to nine hundred men in rebellion? Who, again, could stay them if they broke for the sea, licking up on their way other regiments only too anxious to join? And afterwards . . . here followed windy promises of gold and preferment, office and honour, ever dear to a certain type of Irishman.

As he finished his speech, in the dusk of a twilight, to his chosen associates, there was a sound



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of a rapidly unslung belt behind him. The arm of one Dan Grady flew out in the gloom and arrested something. Then said Dan —

“Mulcahy, you’re a great man, an’ you do credit to whoever sent you. Walk about a bit while we think of it.” Mulcahy departed elate. He knew his words would sink deep.

“Why the triple-dashed asterisks did ye not let me belt him?” grunted a voice.

“Because I’m not a fat-headed fool. Boys, ’tis what he’s been driving at these six months — our superior corp’ril with his education and his copies of the Irish papers and his everlasting beer. He’s been sent for the purpose, and that’s where the money comes from. Can ye not see? That man’s a gold-mine, which Horse Egan here would have destroyed with a belt-buckle. It would be throwing away the gifts of Providence not to fall in with his little plans. Of coorse we’ll mut’ny till all’s dry. Shoot the colonel on the parade-ground, massacre the company officers, ransack the arsenal, and then — Boys, did he tell you what next? He told *me* the other night when he was beginning to talk wild. Then we’re to join with the niggers, and look for help from Dhulip Singh and the Russians!”

“And spoil the best campaign that ever was this side of Hell! Danny, I’d have lost the beer to ha’ given him the belting he requires.”

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"Oh, let him go this awhile, man! He's got no — no constructiveness, but that's the egg-meat of his plan, and you must understand that I'm in with it, an' so are you. We'll want oceans of beer to convince us — firmaments full. We'll give him talk for his money, and one by one all the boys 'll come in and he'll have a nest of nine hundred mutineers to squat in an' give drink to."

"What makes me killing-mad is his wanting us to do what the niggers did thirty years gone. That an' his pig's cheek in saying that other regiments would come along," said a Kerry man.

"That's not so bad as hintin' we should loose off on the colonel."

"Colonel be sugared! I'd as soon as not put a shot through his helmet to see him jump and clutch his old horse's head. But Mulcahy talks o' shootin' our comp'ny orf'cers accidental."

"He said that, did he?" said Horse Egan.

"Somethin' like that, anyways. Can't ye fancy ould Barber Brady wid a bullet in his lungs, coughin' like a sick monkey, an' sayin', 'Bhoys, I do not mind your gettin' dhrunk, but you must hould your liquor like men. The man that shot me is dhrunk. I'll suspend investigations for six hours, while I get this bullet cut out, and then——'"

"'An' then,'" continued Horse Egan, for the peppery Major's peculiarities of speech and manner

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were as well known as his tanned face; “‘an’ then, ye dissolute, half-baked, putty-faced scum o’ Conemara, if I find a man so much as lookin’ confused, begad, I’ll coort-martial the whole company. A man that can’t get over his liquor in six hours is not fit to belong to the Mavericks!’”

A shout of laughter bore witness to the truth of the sketch.

“It’s pretty to think of,” said the Kerry man slowly. “Mulcahy would have us do all the devilmint, and get clear himself, someways. He wudn’t be takin’ all this fool’s throuble in shpoilin’ the reputation of the regimint——”

“Reputation of your grandmother’s pig!” said Dan.

“Well, an’ *be* had a good reputation tu; so it’s all right. Mulcahy must see his way to clear out behind him, or he’d not ha’ come so far, talkin’ powers of darkness.”

“Did you hear anything of a regimental coort-martial among the Black Boneens, these days? Half a company of ’em took one of the new draft an’ hanged him by his arms with a tent-rope from a third-story verandah. They gave no reason for so doin’, but he was half dead. I’m thinking that the Boneens are short-sighted. It was a friend of Mulcahy’s, or a man in the same trade. They’d a deal better ha’ taken his beer,” returned Dan reflectively.

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“Better still ha’ handed him up to the Colonel,” said Horse Egan, “onless—but sure the news wud be all over the counthry an’ give the reg’ment a bad name.”

“An’ there’d be no reward for that man—he but went about talkin’,” said the Kerry man artlessly.

“You speak by your breed,” said Dan, with a laugh. “There was never a Kerry man yet that wudn’t sell his brother for a pipe o’ tobacco an’ a pat on the back from a p’liceman.”

“Praise God I’m not a bloomin’ Orangeman,” was the answer.

“No, nor never will be,” said Dan. “They breed *men* in Ulster. Would you like to thry the taste of one?”

The Kerry man looked and longed, but forbore. The odds of battle were too great.

“Then you’ll not even give Mulcahy a—a strike for his money,” said the voice of Horse Egan, who regarded what he called “trouble” of any kind as the pinnacle of felicity.

Dan answered not at all, but crept on tip-toe, with long strides, to the mess-room, the men following. The room was empty. In a corner, cased like the King of Dahomey’s state umbrella, stood the regimental Colours. Dan lifted them tenderly and unrolled in the light of the candles the record of the Mavericks—tattered, worn, and hacked.

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The white satin was darkened everywhere with big brown stains, the gold threads on the crowned harp were frayed and discoloured, and the Red Bull, the totem of the Mavericks, was coffee-hued. The stiff, embroidered folds, whose price is human life, rustled down slowly. The Mavericks keep their colours long and guard them very sacredly.

“Vittoria, Salamanca, Toulouse, Waterloo, Moodkee, Ferozshah, an’ Sobraon—that was fought close next door here, against the very beggars he wants us to join. Inkerman, The Alma, Sebastopol! What are those little businesses compared to the campaigns of General Mulcahy? The Mut’ny, think o’ that; the Mut’ny an’ some dirty little matters in Afghanistan; an’ for that an’ these an’ those”—Dan pointed to the names of glorious battles—“that Yankee man with the partin’ in his hair comes an’ says as easy as ‘have a drink’ . . . Holy Moses, there’s the captain!”

But it was the mess-sergeant who came in just as the men clattered out, and found the colours uncased.

From that day dated the mutiny of the Mavericks, to the joy of Mulcahy and the pride of his mother in New York—the good lady who sent the money for the beer. Never, so far as words went, was such a mutiny. The conspirators, led by Dan Grady and Horse Egan, poured in daily. They were sound men, men to be trusted, and

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they all wanted blood; but first they must have beer. They cursed the Queen, they mourned over Ireland, they suggested hideous plunder of the Indian country-side, and then, alas—some of the younger men would go forth and wallow on the ground in spasms of wicked laughter. The genius of the Irish for conspiracies is remarkable. None the less they would swear no oaths but those of their own making, which were rare and curious, and they were always at pains to impress Mulcahy with the risks they ran. Naturally the flood of beer wrought demoralisation. But Mulcahy confused the causes of things, and when a very muzzy Maverick smote a sergeant on the nose or called his commanding officer a bald-headed old lard-bladder and even worse names, he fancied that rebellion and not liquor was at the bottom of the outbreak. Other gentlemen who have concerned themselves in larger conspiracies have made the same error.

The hot season, in which they protested no man could rebel, came to an end, and Mulcahy suggested a visible return for his teachings. As to the actual upshot of the mutiny he cared nothing. It would be enough if the English, infatuatedly trusting to the integrity of their army, should be startled with news of an Irish regiment revolting from political considerations. His persistent demands would have ended, at Dan's instigation,



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in a regimental belting which in all probability would have killed him and cut off the supply of beer, had not he been sent on special duty some fifty miles away from the Cantonment to cool his heels in a mud fort and dismount obsolete artillery. Then the colonel of the Mavericks, reading his newspaper diligently, and scenting Frontier trouble from afar, posted to the army headquarters and pled with the Commander-in-chief for certain privileges, to be granted under certain contingencies; which contingencies came about only a week later, when the annual little war on the border developed itself and the colonel returned to carry the good news to the Mavericks. He held the promise of the Chief for active service, and the men must get ready.

On the evening of the same day, Mulcahy, an unconsidered corporal—yet great in conspiracy—returned to cantonments, and heard sounds of strife and howlings from afar off. The mutiny had broken out and the barracks of the Mavericks were one white-washed pandemonium. A private tearing through the barrack-square, gasped in his ear, "Service! Active service. It's a burnin' shame." Oh joy, the Mavericks had risen on the eve of battle! They would not—noble and loyal sons of Ireland—serve the Queen longer. The news would flash through the country-side and over to England, and he—Mulcahy—the



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trusted of the Third Three, had brought about the crash. The private stood in the middle of the square and cursed colonel, regiment, officers, and doctor, particularly the doctor, by his gods. An orderly of the native cavalry regiment clattered through the mob of soldiers. He was half lifted, half dragged from his horse, beaten on the back with mighty hand-claps till his eyes watered, and called all manner of endearing names. Yes, the Mavericks had fraternized with the native troops. Who then was the agent among the latter that had blindly wrought with Mulcahy so well?

An officer slunk, almost ran, from the mess to a barrack. He was mobbed by the infuriated soldiery, who closed round but did not kill him, for he fought his way to shelter, flying for the life. Mulcahy could have wept with pure joy and thankfulness. The very prisoners in the guard-room were shaking the bars of their cells and howling like wild beasts, and from every barrack poured the booming as of a big war-drum.

Mulcahy hastened to his own barrack. He could hardly hear himself speak. Eighty men were pounding with fist and heel the tables and trestles—eighty men, flushed with mutiny, stripped to their shirt sleeves, their knapsacks half-packed for the march to the sea, made the two-inch boards thunder again as they chanted, to

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a tune that Mulcahy knew well, the Sacred War  
Song of the Mavericks—

Listen in the north, my boys, there's trouble on the wind ;  
Tramp o' Cossack hooves in front, gray great-coats behind,  
Trouble on the Frontier of a most amazin' kind,  
Trouble on the waters o' the Oxus !

Then, as the table broke under the furious accompaniment —

Hurrah! hurrah! it's north by west we go ;  
Hurrah! hurrah! the chance we wanted so;  
Let 'em hear the chorus from Umballa to *Moscow*,  
As we go marchin' to the Kremlin.

“Mother of all the saints in bliss and all the devils in cinders, where's my fine new sock wid-out the heel?” howled Horse Egan, ransacking everybody's valise but his own. He was engaged in making up deficiencies of kit preparatory to a campaign, and in that work he steals best who steals last. “Ah, Mulcahy, you're in good time,” he shouted, “We've got the route, and we're off on Thursday for a pic-nic wid the Lancers next door.”

An ambulance orderly appeared with a huge basket full of lint rolls, provided by the forethought of the Queen for such as might need them later

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on. Horse Egan unrolled his bandage, and flicked it under Mulcahy's nose, chanting —

“ Sheepskin an' bees' wax, thunder, pitch, and plaster,  
The more you try to pull it off, the more it sticks the faster.  
As I was goin' to New Orleans —

“ You know the rest of it, my Irish American-Jew boy. By gad, ye have to fight for the Queen in the inside av a fortnight, my darlin'.”

A roar of laughter interrupted. Mulcahy looked vacantly down the room. Bid a boy defy his father when the pantomime-cab is at the door, or a girl develop a will of her own when her mother is putting the last touches to the first ball-dress; but do not ask an Irish regiment to embark upon mutiny on the eve of a campaign, when it has fraternised with the native regiment that accompanies it, and driven its officers into retirement with ten thousand clamorous questions, and the prisoners dance for joy, and the sick men stand in the open calling down all known diseases on the head of the doctor, who has certified that they are “ medically unfit for active service.” At even the Mavericks might have been mistaken for mutineers by one so unversed in their natures as Mulcahy. At dawn a girls' school might have learned deportment from them. They knew that their colonel's hand had closed, and that he who broke

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that iron discipline would not go to the front: nothing in the world will persuade one of our soldiers, when he is ordered to the north on the smallest of affairs, that he is not immediately going gloriously to slay Cossacks and cook his kettles in the palace of the Czar. A few of the younger men mourned for Mulcahy's beer, because the campaign was to be conducted on strict temperance principles, but as Dan and Horse Egan said sternly, "We've got the beer-man with us. He shall drink now on his own hook."

Mulcahy had not taken into account the possibility of being sent on active service. He had made up his mind that he would not go under any circumstances, but fortune was against him.

"Sick—you?" said the doctor, who had served an unholy apprenticeship to his trade in Tralee poorhouses. "You're only home-sick, and what you call varicose veins come from over-eating. A little gentle exercise will cure that." And later, "Mulcahy, my man, everybody is allowed to apply for a sick-certificate *once*. If he tries it twice we call him by an ugly name. Go back to your duty, and let's hear no more of your diseases."

I am ashamed to say that Horse Egan enjoyed the study of Mulcahy's soul in those days, and Dan took an equal interest. Together they would communicate to their corporal all the dark lore of death which is the portion of those who have

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seen men die. Egan had the larger experience, but Dan the finer imagination. Mulcahy shivered when the former spoke of the knife as an intimate acquaintance, or the latter dwelt with loving particularity on the fate of those who, wounded and helpless, had been overlooked by the ambulances, and had fallen into the hands of the Afghan women-folk.

Mulcahy knew that the mutiny, for the present at least, was dead; knew, too, that a change had come over Dan's usually respectful attitude towards him, and Horse Egan's laughter and frequent allusions to abortive conspiracies emphasised all that the conspirator had guessed. The horrible fascination of the death-stories, however, made him seek the men's society. He learned much more than he had bargained for; and in this manner. It was on the last night before the regiment entrained to the front. The barracks were stripped of everything movable, and the men were too excited to sleep. The bare walls gave out a heavy hospital smell of chloride of lime.

"And what," said Mulcahy in an awe-stricken whisper, after some conversation on the eternal subject, "are you going to do to me, Dan?" This might have been the language of an able conspirator conciliating a weak spirit.

"You'll see," said Dan grimly, turning over in his cot, "or I rather shud say you'll not see."

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This was hardly the language of a weak spirit. Mulcahy shook under the bed-clothes.

"Be easy with him," put in Egan from the next cot. "He has got his chanst o' goin' clean. Listen, Mulcahy, all we want is for the good sake of the regiment that you take your death standing up, as a man shud. There's be heaps an' heaps of enemy — plenshus heaps. Go there an' do all you can and die decent. You'll die with a good name *there*. 'Tis not a hard thing considerin'."

Again Mulcahy shivered.

"An' how could a man wish to die better than fightin'?" added Dan consolingly.

"And if I won't?" said the corporal in a dry whisper.

"There'll be a dale of smoke," returned Dan, sitting up and ticking off the situation on his fingers, "sure to be, an' the noise of the firin' 'll be tremenjus, an' we'll be running about up and down, the regiment will. But *we*, Horse and I — we'll stay by you, Mulcahy, and never let you go. Maybe there'll be an accident."

"It's playing it low on me. Let me go. For pity's sake, let me go. I never did you harm, and — and I stood you as much beer as I could. Oh, don't be hard on me, Dan! You are — you were in it too. You won't kill me up there, will you?"

"I'm not thinkin' of the treason; though you shud be glad any honest boys drank with you.



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It's for the regiment. We can't have the shame o' you bringin' shame on us. You went to the doctor quiet as a sick cat to get and stay behind an' live with the women at the depôt — you that wanted us to run to the sea in wolf-packs like the rebels none of your black blood dared to be! But *we* knew about your goin' to the doctor, for he told in mess, and it's all over the regiment. Bein', as we are, your best friends, we didn't allow any one to molest you *yet*. We will see to you ourselves. Fight which you will — us or the enemy — you'll never lie in that cot again, and there's more glory and maybe less kicks from fightin' the enemy. That's fair speakin'."

"And he told us by word of mouth to go and join with the niggers — you've forgotten that, Dan," said Horse Egan, to justify sentence.

"What's the use of plaguin' the man? One shot pays for all. Sleep ye sound, Mulcahy. But you onderstand, do ye not?"

Mulcahy for some weeks understood very little of anything at all save that ever at his elbow, in camp or at parade, stood two big men with soft voices adjuring him to commit *bari-kari* lest a worse thing should happen — to die for the honour of the regiment in decency among the nearest knives. But Mulcahy dreaded death. He remembered certain things that priests had said in his infancy, and his mother — not the one at New



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York — starting from her sleep with shrieks to pray for a husband's soul in torment. It is well to be of a cultured intelligence, but in time of trouble the weak human mind returns to the creed it sucked in at the breast, and if that creed be not a pretty one trouble follows. Also, the death he would have to face would be physically painful. Most conspirators have large imaginations. Mulcahy could see himself, as he lay on the earth in the night, dying by various causes. They were all horrible; the mother in New York was very far away, and the Regiment, the engine that, once you fall in its grip, moves you forward whether you will or won't, was daily coming closer to the enemy!

. . . . .

They were brought to the field of Marzun-Katai, and with the Black Boneens to aid, they fought a fight that has never been set down in the newspapers. In response, many believe, to the fervent prayers of Father Dennis, the enemy not only elected to fight in the open, but made a beautiful fight, as many weeping Irish mothers knew later. They gathered behind walls or flickered across the open in shouting masses, and were pot-valiant in artillery. It was expedient to hold a large reserve and wait for the psychological moment that was being prepared by the shrieking

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shrapnel. Therefore the Mavericks lay down in open order on the brow of a hill to watch the play till their call should come. Father Dennis, whose duty was in the rear, to smooth the trouble of the wounded, had naturally managed to make his way to the foremost of his boys, and lay like a black porpoise, at length on the grass. To him crawled Mulcahy, ashen-gray, demanding absolution.

“Wait till you’re shot,” said Father Dennis sweetly. “There’s a time for everything.”

Dan Grady chuckled as he blew for the fiftieth time into the breech of his speckless rifle. Mulcahy groaned and buried his head in his arms till a stray shot spoke like a snipe immediately above his head, and a general heave and tremour rippled the line. Other shots followed and a few took effect, as a shriek or a grunt attested. The officers, who had been lying down with the men, rose and began to walk steadily up and down the front of their companies.

This manœuvre, executed, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith, to soothe men, demands nerve. You must not hurry, you must not look nervous, though you know that you are a mark for every rifle within extreme range, and above all if you are smitten you must make as little noise as possible and roll inwards through the files. It is at this hour, when the breeze brings the first

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salt whiff of the powder to noses rather cold at the tip, and the eye can quietly take in the appearance of each red casualty, that the strain on the nerves is strongest. Scotch regiments can endure for half a day and abate no whit of their zeal at the end; English regiments sometimes sulk under punishment, while the Irish, like the French, are apt to run forward by ones and twos, which is just as bad as running back. The truly wise commandant of highly-strung troops allows them, in seasons of waiting, to hear the sound of their own voices uplifted in song. There is a legend of an English regiment that lay by its arms under fire chaunting "Sam Hall," to the horror of its newly appointed and pious colonel. The Black Boneens, who were suffering more than the Mavericks, on a hill half a mile away, began presently to explain to all who cared to listen —

We'll sound the jubilee, from the centre to the sea,  
And Ireland shall be free, says the Shan-van Vogh.

"Sing, boys," said Father Dennis softly. "It looks as if we cared for their Afghan peas."

Dan Grady raised himself to his knees and opened his mouth in a song imparted to him, as to most of his comrades, in the strictest confidence by Mulcahy — that Mulcahy then lying limp and fainting on the grass, the chill fear of death upon him.

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Company after company caught up the words which, the I. A. A. say, are to herald the general rising of Erin, and to breathe which, except to those duly appointed to hear, is death. Wherefore they are printed in this place.

The Saxon in Heaven's just balance is weighed,  
His doom like Belshazzar's in death has been cast,  
And the hand of the venger shall never be stayed  
Till his race, faith, and speech are a dream of the past.

They were heart-filling lines and they ran with a swirl; the I. A. A. are better served by their pens than their petards. Dan clapped Mulcahy merrily on the back, asking him to sing up. The officers lay down again. There was no need to walk any more. Their men were soothing themselves thunderously, thus —

St. Mary in Heaven has written the vow  
That the land shall not rest till the heretic blood,  
From the babe at the breast to the hand at the plough,  
Has rolled to the ocean like Shannon in flood!

“I'll speak to you after all's over,” said Father Dennis authoritatively in Dan's ear. “What's the use of confessing to me when you do this foolishness? Dan, you've been playing with fire! I'll lay you more penance in a week than ——”

“Come along to Purgatory with us, Father dear.

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The Boneens are on the move; they'll let us go now!"

The regiment rose to the blast of the bugle as one man; but one man there was who rose more swiftly than all the others, for half an inch of bayonet was in the fleshy part of his leg.

"You've got to do it," said Dan grimly. "Do it decent, anyhow;" and the roar of the rush drowned his words, for the rear companies thrust forward the first, still singing as they swung down the slope —

From the child at the breast to the hand at the plough  
Shall roll to the ocean like Shannon in flood!

They should have sung it in the face of England, not of the Afghans, whom it impressed as much as did the wild Irish yell.

"They came down singing," said the unofficial report of the enemy, borne from village to village the next day. "They continued to sing, and it was written that our men could not abide when they came. It is believed that there was magic in the aforesaid song."

Dan and Horse Egan kept themselves in the neighbourhood of Mulcahy. Twice the man would have bolted back in the confusion. Twice he was heaved, kicked, and shouldered back again into the unpaintable inferno of a hotly contested charge.

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At the end, the panic excess of his fear drove him into madness beyond all human courage. His eyes staring at nothing, his mouth open and frothing, and breathing as one in a cold bath, he went forward demented, while Dan toiled after him. The charge checked at a high mud wall. It was Mulcahy who scrambled up tooth and nail and hurled down among the bayonets the amazed Afghan who barred his way. It was Mulcahy, keeping to the straight line of the rabid dog, who led a collection of ardent souls at a newly unmasked battery and flung himself on the muzzle of a gun as his companions danced among the gunners. It was Mulcahy who ran wildly on from that battery into the open plain, where the enemy were retiring in sullen groups. His hands were empty, he had lost helmet and belt, and he was bleeding from a wound in the neck. Dan and Horse Egan, panting and distressed, had thrown themselves down on the ground by the captured guns, when they noticed Mulcahy's charge.

"Mad," said Horse Egan critically. "Mad with fear! He's going straight to his death, an' shouting's no use."

"Let him go. Watch now! If we fire we'll hit him maybe."

The last of a hurrying crowd of Afghans turned at the noise of shod feet behind him, and shifted



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his knife ready to hand. This, he saw, was no time to take prisoners. Mulcahy tore on, sobbing; the straight-held blade went home through the defenceless breast, and the body pitched forward almost before a shot from Dan's rifle brought down the slayer and still further hurried the Afghan retreat. The two Irishmen went out to bring in their dead.

"He was given the point, and that was an easy death," said Horse Egan, viewing the corpse. "But would you ha' shot him, Danny, if he had lived?"

"He didn't live, so there's no sayin'. But I doubt I wud have bekaze of the fun he gave us—let alone the beer. Hike up his legs, Horse, and we'll bring him in. Perhaps 'tis better this way."

They bore the poor limp body to the mass of the regiment, lolling open-mouthed on their rifles; and there was a general snigger when one of the younger subalterns said, "That was a good man!"

"Phew," said Horse Egan, when a burial-party had taken over the burden. "I'm powerful dhry, and this reminds me there'll be no more beer at all."

"Fwhy not?" said Dan, with a twinkle in his eye as he stretched himself for rest. "Are we not conspirin' all we can, an' while we conspire are we not entitled to free dhrinks? Sure his ould mother in New York would not let her son's



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comrades perish of drouth—if she can be reached at the end of a letter.”

“You’re a janius,” said Horse Egan. “O’ coorse she will not. I wish this crool war was over, an’ we’d get back to canteen. Faith, the Commander-in-chief ought to be hanged in his own little sword-belt for makin’ us work on wather.”

The Mavericks were generally of Horse Egan’s opinion. So they made haste to get their work done as soon as possible, and their industry was rewarded by unexpected peace. “We can fight the sons of Adam,” said the tribesmen, “but we cannot fight the sons of Eblis, and this regiment never stays still in one place. Let us therefore come in.” They came in, and “this regiment” withdrew to conspire under the leadership of Dan Grady.

Excellent as a subordinate, Dan failed altogether as a chief-in-command—possibly because he was too much swayed by the advice of the only man in the regiment who could manufacture more than one kind of handwriting. The same mail that bore to Mulcahy’s mother in New York a letter from the colonel telling her how valiantly her son had fought for the Queen, and how assuredly he would have been recommended for the Victoria Cross had he survived, carried a communication signed, I grieve to say, by that same colonel and

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all the officers of the regiment, explaining their willingness to do "anything which is contrary to the regulations and all kinds of revolutions" if only a little money could be forwarded to cover incidental expenses. Daniel Grady, Esquire, would receive funds, *vice* Mulcahy, who "was unwell at this present time of writing."

Both letters were forwarded from New York to Tehama Street, San Francisco, with marginal comments as brief as they were bitter. The Third Three read and looked at each other. Then the Second Conspirator—he who believed in "joining hands with the practical branches"—began to laugh, and on recovering his gravity said, "Gentlemen, I consider this will be a lesson to us. We're left again. Those cursed Irish have let us down. I knew they would, but"—here he laughed afresh—"I'd give considerable to know what was at the back of it all."

His curiosity would have been satisfied had he seen Dan Grady, discredited regimental conspirator, trying to explain to his thirsty comrades in India the non-arrival of funds from New York.

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The Earth gave up her dead that tide,  
    Into our camp he came,  
And said his say, and went his way,  
    And left our hearts aflame.

Keep tally — on the gun-butt score  
    The vengeance we must take,  
When God shall bring full reckoning,  
    For our dead comrade's sake.

*Ballad.*

LET it be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt. As an Oriental he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the most easterly of western peoples instead of the most westerly of easterns that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle. The host never knows which side of his nature is going to turn up next.

Dirkovitch was a Russian — a Russian of the Russians — who appeared to get his bread by serving the Czar as an officer in a Cossack regiment, and corresponding for a Russian newspaper with a name that was never twice alike. He was a handsome young Oriental, fond of wandering through

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unexplored portions of the earth, and he arrived in India from nowhere in particular. At least no living man could ascertain whether it was by way of Balkh, Badakshan, Chitral, Beluchistan, or Nepaul, or anywhere else. The Indian Government, being in an unusually affable mood, gave orders that he was to be civilly treated and shown everything that was to be seen. So he drifted, talking bad English and worse French, from one city to another, till he foregathered with Her Majesty's White Hussars in the city of Peshawur, which stands at the mouth of that narrow swordcut in the hills that men call the Khyber Pass. He was undoubtedly an officer, and he was decorated after the manner of the Russians with little enamelled crosses, and he could talk, and (though this has nothing to do with his merits) he had been given up as a hopeless task, or cask, by the Black Tyrone, who individually and collectively, with hot whiskey and honey, mulled brandy, and mixed spirits of every kind, had striven in all hospitality to make him drunk. And when the Black Tyrone, who are exclusively Irish, fail to disturb the peace of head of a foreigner—that foreigner is certain to be a superior man.

The White Hussars were as conscientious in choosing their wine as in charging the enemy. All that they possessed, including some wondrous brandy, was placed at the absolute disposition of

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Dirkovitch, and he enjoyed himself hugely — even more than among the Black Tyrones.

But he remained distressingly European through it all. The White Hussars were “My dear true friends,” “Fellow-soldiers glorious,” and “Brothers inseparable.” He would unburden himself by the hour on the glorious future that awaited the combined arms of England and Russia when their hearts and their territories should run side by side, and the great mission of civilising Asia should begin. That was unsatisfactory, because Asia is not going to be civilised after the methods of the West. There is too much Asia and she is too old. You cannot reform a lady of many lovers, and Asia has been insatiable in her flirtations aforetime. She will never attend Sunday-school or learn to vote save with swords for tickets.

Dirkovitch knew this as well as any one else, but it suited him to talk special-correspondently and to make himself as genial as he could. Now and then he volunteered a little, a very little, information about his own sotnia of Cossacks, left apparently to look after themselves somewhere at the back of beyond. He had done rough work in Central Asia, and had seen rather more help-yourself fighting than most men of his years. But he was careful never to betray his superiority, and more than careful to praise on all occasions the appearance, drill, uniform, and organisation of Her

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Majesty's White Hussars. And indeed they were a regiment to be admired. When Lady Durgan, widow of the late Sir John Durgan, arrived in their station, and after a short time had been proposed to by every single man at mess, she put the public sentiment very neatly when she explained that they were all so nice that unless she could marry them all, including the colonel and some majors already married, she was not going to content herself with one hussar. Wherefore she wedded a little man in a rifle regiment, being by nature contradictory; and the White Hussars were going to wear crape on their arms, but compromised by attending the wedding in full force, and lining the aisle with unutterable reproach. She had jilted them all — from Basset-Holmer the senior captain to little Mildred the junior subaltern, who could have given her four thousand a year and a title.

The only persons who did not share the general regard for the White Hussars were a few thousand gentlemen of Jewish extraction who lived across the border, and answered to the name of Pathan. They had once met the regiment officially and for something less than twenty minutes, but the interview, which was complicated with many casualties, had filled them with prejudice. They even called the White Hussars children of the devil and sons of persons whom it would be perfectly impossible to meet in decent society. Yet they



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were not above making their aversion fill their money-belts. The regiment possessed carbines — beautiful Martini-Henry carbines that would lob a bullet into an enemy's camp at one thousand yards, and were even handier than the long rifle. Therefore they were coveted all along the border, and since demand inevitably breeds supply, they were supplied at the risk of life and limb for exactly their weight in coined silver — seven and one half pounds' weight of rupees, or sixteen pounds sterling reckoning the rupee at par. They were stolen at night by snaky-haired thieves who crawled on their stomachs under the nose of the sentries; they disappeared mysteriously from locked arm-racks, and in the hot weather, when all the barrack doors and windows were open, they vanished like puffs of their own smoke. The border people desired them for family vendettas and contingencies. But in the long cold nights of the northern Indian winter they were stolen most extensively. The traffic of murder was liveliest among the hills at that season, and prices ruled high. The regimental guards were first doubled and then trebled. A trooper does not much care if he loses a weapon — Government must make it good — but he deeply resents the loss of his sleep. The regiment grew very angry, and one rifle-thief bears the visible marks of their anger upon him to this hour. That in-



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cident stopped the burglaries for a time, and the guards were reduced accordingly, and the regiment devoted itself to polo with unexpected results; for it beat by two goals to one that very terrible polo corps the Lushkar Light Horse, though the latter had four ponies apiece for a short hour's fight, as well as a native officer who played like a lambent flame across the ground.

They gave a dinner to celebrate the event. The Lushkar team came, and Dirkovitch came, in the fullest full uniform of a Cossack officer, which is as full as a dressing-gown, and was introduced to the Lushkars, and opened his eyes as he regarded. They were lighter men than the Hussars, and they carried themselves with the swing that is the peculiar right of the Punjab Frontier Force and all Irregular Horse. Like everything else in the Service it has to be learnt, but, unlike many things, it is never forgotten, and remains on the body till death.

The great beam-roofed mess-room of the White Hussars was a sight to be remembered. All the mess plate was out on the long table—the same table that had served up the bodies of five officers after a forgotten fight long and long ago—the dingy, battered standards faced the door of entrance, clumps of winter-roses lay between the silver candlesticks, and the portraits of eminent officers deceased looked down on their succes-

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sors from between the heads of sambhur, nilghai, markhor, and, pride of all the mess, two grinning snow-leopards that had cost Basset-Holmer four months' leave that he might have spent in England, instead of on the road to Thibet and the daily risk of his life by ledge, snow-slide, and grassy slope.

The servants in spotless white muslin and the crest of their regiments on the brow of their turbans waited behind their masters, who were clad in the scarlet and gold of the White Hussars, and the cream and silver of the Lushkar Light Horse. Dirkovitch's dull green uniform was the only dark spot at the board, but his big onyx eyes made up for it. He was fraternising effusively with the captain of the Lushkar team, who was wondering how many of Dirkovitch's Cossacks his own dark wiry down-countrymen could account for in a fair charge. But one does not speak of these things openly.

The talk rose higher and higher, and the regimental band played between the courses, as is the immemorial custom, till all tongues ceased for a moment with the removal of the dinner-slips and the first toast of obligation, when an officer rising said, "Mr. Vice, the Queen," and little Mildred from the bottom of the table answered, "The Queen, God bless her," and the big spurs clanked as the big men heaved themselves up and drank

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the Queen upon whose pay they were falsely supposed to settle their mess-bills. That Sacrament of the Mess never grows old, and never ceases to bring a lump into the throat of the listener wherever he be by sea or by land. Dirkovitch rose with his "brothers glorious," but he could not understand. No one but an officer can tell what the toast means; and the bulk have more sentiment than comprehension. Immediately after the little silence that follows on the ceremony there entered the native officer who had played for the Lushkar team. He could not, of course, eat with the mess, but he came in at dessert, all six feet of him, with the blue and silver turban atop, and the big black boots below. The mess rose joyously as he thrust forward the hilt of his sabre in token of fealty for the colonel of the White Hussars to touch, and dropped into a vacant chair amid shouts of: "*Rung ho, Hira Singh!*" (which being translated means "Go in and win"). "Did I whack you over the knee, old man?" "Ressaidar Sahib, what the devil made you play that kicking pig of a pony in the last ten minutes?" "*Shabash, Ressaidar Sahib!*" Then the voice of the colonel, "The health of Ressaidar Hira Singh!"

After the shouting had died away Hira Singh rose to reply, for he was the cadet of a royal house, the son of a king's son, and knew what was due on these occasions. Thus he spoke in the

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vernacular:—"Colonel Sahib and officers of this regiment. Much honour have you done me. This will I remember. We came down from afar to play you. But we were beaten." ("No fault of yours, Ressaïdar Sahib. Played on our own ground, y' know. Your ponies were cramped from the railway. Don't apologise!") "Therefore perhaps we will come again if it be so ordained." ("Hear! Hear! Hear, indeed! Bravo! Hsh!") "Then we will play you afresh" ("Happy to meet you.") "till there are left no feet upon our ponies. Thus far for sport." He dropped one hand on his sword-hilt and his eye wandered to Dirkovitch lolling back in his chair. "But if by the will of God there arises any other game which is not the polo game, then be assured, Colonel Sahib and officers, that we will play it out side by side, though *they*," again his eye sought Dirkovitch, "though *they*, I say, have fifty ponies to our one horse." And with a deep-mouthed *Rung ho!* that sounded like a musket-butt on flagstones he sat down amid leaping glasses.

Dirkovitch, who had devoted himself steadily to the brandy—the terrible brandy aforementioned—did not understand, nor did the expurgated translations offered to him at all convey the point. Decidedly Hira Singh's was the speech of the evening, and the clamour might have continued to the dawn had it not been broken by the noise

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of a shot without that sent every man feeling at his defenseless left side. Then there was a scuffle and a yell of pain.

“Carbine-stealing again!” said the adjutant, calmly sinking back in his chair. “This comes of reducing the guards. I hope the sentries have killed him.”

The feet of armed men pounded on the verandah flags, and it was as though something was being dragged.

“Why don’t they put him in the cells till the morning?” said the colonel testily. “See if they’ve damaged him, sergeant.”

The mess sergeant fled out into the darkness and returned with two troopers and a corporal, all very much perplexed.

“Caught a man stealin’ carbines, sir,” said the corporal. “Leastways ’e was crawlin’ towards the barricks, sir, past the main road sentries, an’ the sentry ’e sez, sir——”

The limp heap of rags upheld by the three men groaned. Never was seen so destitute and demoralised an Afghan. He was turbanless, shoeless, caked with dirt, and all but dead with rough handling. Hira Singh started slightly at the sound of the man’s pain. Dirkovitch took another glass of brandy.

“*What* does the sentry say?” said the colonel.

“Sez ’e speaks English, sir,” said the corporal.

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“So you brought him into mess instead of handing him over to the sergeant! If he spoke all the Tongues of the Pentecost you’ve no business ——”

Again the bundle groaned and muttered. Little Mildred had risen from his place to inspect. He jumped back as though he had been shot.

“Perhaps it would be better, sir, to send the men away,” said he to the colonel, for he was a much privileged subaltern. He put his arms round the rag-bound horror as he spoke, and dropped him into a chair. It may not have been explained that the littleness of Mildred lay in his being six feet four and big in proportion. The corporal seeing that an officer was disposed to look after the capture, and that the colonel’s eye was beginning to blaze, promptly removed himself and his men. The mess was left alone with the carbine-thief, who laid his head on the table and wept bitterly, hopelessly, and inconsolably as little children weep.

Hira Singh leapt to his feet. “Colonel Sahib,” said he, “that man is no Afghan, for they weep *Ai! Ai!* Nor is he of Hindustan, for they weep *Oh! Ho!* He weeps after the fashion of the white men, who say *Ow! Ow!*”

“Now where the dickens did you get that knowledge, Hira Singh?” said the captain of the Lushkar team.

“Hear him!” said Hira Singh simply, pointing



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at the crumpled figure that wept as though it would never cease.

“He said, ‘My God!’” said little Mildred. “I heard him say it.”

The colonel and the mess-room looked at the man in silence. It is a horrible thing to hear a man cry. A woman can sob from the top of her palate, or her lips, or anywhere else, but a man must cry from his diaphragm, and it rends him to pieces.

“Poor devil!” said the colonel, coughing tremendously. “We ought to send him to hospital. He’s been man-handled.”

Now the adjutant loved his carbines. They were to him as his grandchildren, the men standing in the first place. He grunted rebelliously: “I can understand an Afghan stealing, because he’s built that way. But I can’t understand his crying. That makes it worse.”

The brandy must have affected Dirkovitch, for he lay back in his chair and stared at the ceiling. There was nothing special in the ceiling beyond a shadow as of a huge black coffin. Owing to some peculiarity in the construction of the mess-room, this shadow was always thrown when the candles were lighted. It never disturbed the digestion of the White Hussars. They were in fact rather proud of it.

“Is he going to cry all night?” said the colonel,



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“or are we supposed to sit up with little Mildred’s guest until he feels better?”

The man in the chair threw up his head and stared at the mess. “Oh, my God!” he said, and every soul in the mess rose to his feet. Then the Lushkar captain did a deed for which he ought to have been given the Victoria Cross—distinguished gallantry in a fight against overwhelming curiosity. He picked up his team with his eyes as the hostess picks up the ladies at the opportune moment, and pausing only by the colonel’s chair to say, “This isn’t *our* affair, you know, sir,” led them into the verandah and the gardens. Hira Singh was the last to go, and he looked at Dirkovitch. But Dirkovitch had departed into a brandy-paradise of his own. His lips moved without sound and he was studying the coffin on the ceiling.

“White—white all over,” said Basset-Holmer, the adjutant. “What a pernicious renegade he must be! I wonder where he came from?”

The colonel shook the man gently by the arm, and “Who are you?” said he.

There was no answer. The man stared round the mess-room and smiled in the colonel’s face. Little Mildred, who was always more of a woman than a man till “Boot and saddle” was sounded, repeated the question in a voice that would have drawn confidences from a geyser. The man only smiled. Dirkovitch at the far end of the table

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slid gently from his chair to the floor. No son of Adam in this present imperfect world can mix the Hussars' champagne with the Hussars' brandy by five and eight glasses of each without remembering the pit whence he was digged and descending thither. The band began to play the tune with which the White Hussars from the date of their formation have concluded all their functions. They would sooner be disbanded than abandon that tune; it is a part of their system. The man straightened himself in his chair and drummed on the table with his fingers.

"I don't see why we should entertain lunatics," said the colonel. "Call a guard and send him off to the cells. We'll look into the business in the morning. Give him a glass of wine first, though."

Little Mildred filled a sherry-glass with the brandy and thrust it over to the man. He drank, and the tune rose louder, and he straightened himself yet more. Then he put out his long-taloned hands to a piece of plate opposite and fingered it lovingly. There was a mystery connected with that piece of plate, in the shape of a spring which converted what was a seven-branched candlestick, three springs on each side and one in the middle, into a sort of wheel-spoke candelabrum. He found the spring, pressed it, and laughed weakly. He rose from his chair and inspected a picture on the wall, then moved on to another picture, the

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mess watching him without a word. When he came to the mantelpiece he shook his head and seemed distressed. A piece of plate representing a mounted hussar in full uniform caught his eye. He pointed to it, and then to the mantelpiece with inquiry in his eyes.

“What is it — Oh, what is it?” said little Mildred. Then, as a mother might speak to a child, “That is a horse. Yes, a horse.”

Very slowly came the answer in a thick, passionless guttural — “Yes, I — have seen. But — where is *the* horse?”

You could have heard the hearts of the mess beating as the men drew back to give the stranger full room in his wanderings. There was no question of calling the guard.

Again he spoke — very slowly, “Where is *our* horse?”

There is but one horse in the White Hussars, and his portrait hangs outside the door of the mess-room. He is the piebald drum-horse, the king of the regimental band, that served the regiment for seven-and-thirty years, and in the end was shot for old age. Half the mess tore the thing down from its place and thrust it into the man's hands. He placed it above the mantelpiece, it clattered on the ledge as his poor hands dropped it, and he staggered towards the bottom of the table, falling into Mildred's chair. Then all the men spoke to one

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another something after this fashion, "The drum-horse hasn't hung over the mantelpiece since '67." "How does he know?" "Mildred, go and speak to him again." "Colonel, what are you going to do?" "Oh, dry up, and give the poor devil a chance to pull himself together." "It isn't possible anyhow. The man's a lunatic."

Little Mildred stood at the colonel's side, talking in his ear. "Will you be good enough to take your seats please, gentlemen!" he said, and the mess dropped into the chairs. Only Dirkovitch's seat, next to little Mildred's, was blank, and little Mildred himself had found Hira Singh's place. The wide-eyed mess-sergeant filled the glasses in dead silence. Once more the colonel rose, but his hand shook, and the port spilled on the table as he looked straight at the man in little Mildred's chair and said hoarsely, "Mr. Vice, the Queen." There was a little pause, but the man sprung to his feet and answered without hesitation, "The Queen, God bless her!" and as he emptied the thin glass he snapped the shank between his fingers.

Long and long ago, when the Empress of India was a young woman, and there were no unclean ideals in the land, it was the custom of a few messes to drink the Queen's toast in broken glass, to the vast delight of the mess-contractors. The custom is now dead, because there is nothing to break anything for, except now and again the word

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of a Government, and that has been broken already.

"That settles it," said the colonel, with a gasp. "He's not a sergeant. What in the world is he?"

The entire mess echoed the word, and the volley of questions would have scared any man. It was no wonder that the ragged, filthy invader could only smile and shake his head.

From under the table, calm and smiling, rose Dirkovitch, who had been roused from healthful slumber by feet upon his body. By the side of the man he rose, and the man shrieked and grovelled. It was a horrible sight, coming so swiftly upon the pride and glory of the toast that had brought the strayed wits together.

Dirkovitch made no offer to raise him, but little Mildred heaved him up in an instant. It is not good that a gentleman who can answer to the Queen's toast should lie at the feet of a subaltern of Cossacks.

The hasty action tore the wretch's upper clothing nearly to the waist, and his body was seamed with dry black scars. There is only one weapon in the world that cuts in parallel lines, and it is neither the cane nor the cat. Dirkovitch saw the marks, and the pupils of his eyes dilated. Also his face changed. He said something that sounded like *Shto ve takete*, and the man fawning answered, *Chetyre*.

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“What’s that?” said everybody together.

“His number. That is number four, you know.” Dirkovitch spoke very thickly.

“What has a Queen’s officer to do with a qualified number?” said the Colonel, and an unpleasant growl ran round the table.

“How can I tell?” said the affable Oriental with a sweet smile. “He is a—how you have it?—escape—run-a-way, from over there.” He nodded towards the darkness of the night.

“Speak to him if he’ll answer you, and speak to him gently,” said little Mildred, settling the man in a chair. It seemed most improper to all present that Dirkovitch should sip brandy as he talked in purring, spitting Russian to the creature who answered so feebly and with such evident dread. But since Dirkovitch appeared to understand, no one said a word. All breathed heavily leaning forward, in the long gaps of the conversation. The next time that they have no engagements on hand the White Hussars intend to go to St. Petersburg in a body to learn Russian.

“He does not know how many years ago,” said Dirkovitch, facing the mess, “but he says it was very long ago in a war. I think that there was an accident. He says he was of this glorious and distinguished regiment in the war.”

“The rolls! The rolls! Holmer, get the rolls!” said little Mildred, and the adjutant



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dashed off bare-headed to the orderly-room, where the muster-rolls of the regiment were kept. He returned just in time to hear Dirkovitch conclude, "Therefore, my dear friends, I am most sorry to say there was an accident which would have been reparable if he had apologised to that our colonel, which he had insulted."

Then followed another growl which the colonel tried to beat down. The mess was in no mood just then to weigh insults to Russian colonels.

"He does not remember, but I think that there was an accident, and so he was not exchanged among the prisoners, but he was sent to another place—how do you say?—the country. *So*, he says, he came here. He does not know how he came. Eh? He was at Chepany,"—the man caught the word, nodded, and shivered,—“at Zhigansk and Irkutsk. I cannot understand how he escaped. He says, too, that he was in the forests for many years, but how many years he has forgotten—that with many things. It was an accident; done because he did not apologise to that our colonel. Ah!”

Instead of echoing Dirkovitch's sigh of regret, it is sad to record that the White Hussars lively exhibited un-Christian delight and other emotions, hardly restrained by their sense of hospitality. Holmer flung the frayed and yellow regimental rolls on the table, and the men flung themselves at these.



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“Steady! Fifty-six — fifty-five — fifty-four,” said Holmer. “Here we are. ‘Lieutenant Austin Limmason. *Missing.*’ That was before Sebastopol. What an infernal shame! Insulted one of their colonels, and was quietly shipped off. Thirty years of his life wiped out.”

“But he never apologised. Said he’d see him damned first,” chorused the mess.

“Poor chap! I suppose he never had the chance afterwards. How did he come here?” said the colonel.

The dingy heap in the chair could give no answer.

“Do you know who you are?”

It laughed weakly.

“Do you know that you are Limmason — Lieutenant Limmason of the White Hussars?”

Swiftly as a shot came the answer, in a slightly surprised tone, “Yes, I’m Limmason, of course.” The light died out in his eyes, and the man collapsed, watching every motion of Dirkovitch with terror. A flight from Siberia may fix a few elementary facts in the mind, but it does not seem to lead to continuity of thought. The man could not explain how, like a homing pigeon, he had found his way to his own old mess again. Of what he had suffered or seen he knew nothing. He cringed before Dirkovitch as instinctively as he had pressed the spring of the candlestick,

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sought the picture of the drum-horse, and answered to the toast of the Queen. The rest was a blank that the dreaded Russian tongue could only in part remove. His head bowed on his breast, and he giggled and cowered alternately.

The devil that lived in the brandy prompted Dirkovitch at this extremely inopportune moment to make a speech. He rose, swaying slightly, gripped the table-edge, while his eyes glowed like opals, and began :

“Fellow-soldiers glorious—true friends and hospitable. It was an accident, and deplorable—most deplorable.” Here he smiled sweetly all round the mess. “But you will think of this little, little thing. So little, is it not? The Czar! Posh! I slap my fingers—I snap my fingers at him. Do I believe in him? No! But in us Slav who has done nothing, *him* I believe. Seventy—how much—millions peoples that have done nothing—not one thing. Posh! Napoleon was an episode.” He banged a hand on the table. “Hear you, old peoples, we have done nothing in the world—out here. All our work is to do; and it shall be done, old peoples. Get a-way!” He waved his hand imperiously, and pointed to the man. “You see him. He is not good to see. He was just one little—oh, so little—accident, that no one remembered. Now he is

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*That!* So will you be, brother soldiers so brave —so will you be. But you will never come back. You will all go where he is gone, or"—he pointed to the great coffin-shadow on the ceiling, and muttering, "Seventy millions—get a-way, you old peoples," fell asleep.

"Sweet, and to the point," said little Mildred. "What's the use of getting wroth? Let's make this poor devil comfortable."

But that was a matter suddenly and swiftly taken from the loving hands of the White Hussars. The lieutenant had returned only to go away again three days later, when the wail of the Dead March, and the tramp of the squadrons, told the wondering Station, who saw no gap in the mess-table, that an officer of the regiment had resigned his new-found commission.

And Dirkovitch, bland, supple, and always genial, went away too by a night train. Little Mildred and another man saw him off, for he was the guest of the mess, and even had he smitten the colonel with the open hand, the law of that mess allowed no relaxation of hospitality.

"Good-bye, Dirkovitch, and a pleasant journey," said little Mildred.

"*Au revoir*," said the Russian.

"Indeed! But we thought you were going home?"

"Yes, but I will come again. My dear friends,

## THE MAN WHO WAS

is that road shut?" He pointed to where the North Star burned over the Khyber Pass.

"By Jove! I forgot. Of course. Happy to meet you, old man, any time you like. Got everything you want? Cheroots, ice, bedding? That's all right. Well, *au revoir*, Dirkovitch."

"Um," said the other man, as the tail-lights of the train grew small. "Of — all — the — unmitigated ——!"

Little Mildred answered nothing, but watched the North Star and hummed a selection from a recent Simla burlesque that had much delighted the White Hussars. It ran —

I'm sorry for Mister Bluebeard,  
I'm sorry to cause him pain;  
But a terrible spree there's sure to be  
When he comes back again.

## ONLY A SUBALTERN

. . . Not only to enforce by command but to encourage by example the energetic discharge of duty and the steady endurance of the difficulties and privations inseparable from Military Service.— *Bengal Army Regulations.*

THEY made Bobby Wick pass an examination at Sandhurst. He was a gentleman before he was gazetted, so, when the Empress announced that “Gentleman-Cadet Robert Hanna Wick” was posted as Second Lieutenant to the Tyneside Tail Twisters at Krab Bokhar, he became an officer *and* a gentleman, which is an enviable thing; and there was joy in the house of Wick, where Mamma Wick and all the little Wicks fell upon their knees and offered incense to Bobby by virtue of his achievements.

Papa Wick had been a Commissioner in his day, holding authority over three millions of men in the Chota-Buldana Division, building great works for the good of the land, and doing his best to make two blades of grass grow where there was but one before. Of course, nobody knew anything about this in the little English village where he was just “old Mr. Wick” and had forgotten

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that he was a Companion of the Order of the Star of India.

He patted Bobby on the shoulder and said: "Well done, my boy!"

There followed, while the uniform was being prepared, an interval of pure delight, during which Bobby took brevet-rank as a "man" at the women-swamped tennis-parties and tea-fights of the village, and, I daresay, had his joining-time been extended, would have fallen in love with several girls at once. Little country villages at Home are very full of nice girls, because all the young men come out to India to make their fortunes.

"India," said Papa Wick, "is the place. I've had thirty years of it, and, begad, I'd like to go back again. When you join the Tail Twisters you'll be among friends, if every one hasn't forgotten Wick of Chota-Buldana, and a lot of people will be kind to you for our sakes. The mother will tell you more about outfit than I can, but remember this. Stick to your Regiment, Bobby — stick to your Regiment. You'll see men all round you going into the Staff Corps, and doing every possible sort of duty but regimental, and you may be tempted to follow suit. Now so long as you keep within your allowance, and I haven't stinted you there, stick to the Line, the whole Line, and nothing but the Line. Be careful how you back another young fool's bill, and if you fall in

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love with a woman twenty years older than yourself, don't tell *me* about it, that's all."

With these counsels, and many others equally valuable, did Papa Wick fortify Bobby ere that last awful night at Portsmouth when the Officers' Quarters held more inmates than were provided for by the Regulations, and the liberty-men of the ships fell foul of the drafts for India, and the battle raged from the Dockyard Gates even to the slums of Longport, while the drabs of Fratton came down and scratched the faces of the Queen's Officers.

Bobby Wick, with an ugly bruise on his freckled nose, a sick and shaky detachment to manœuvre inship, and the comfort of fifty scornful females to attend to, had no time to feel homesick till the *Malabar* reached mid-Channel, when he doubled his emotions with a little guard-visiting and a great many other matters.

The Tail Twisters were a most particular Regiment. Those who knew them least said that they were eaten up with "side." But their reserve and their internal arrangements generally were merely protective diplomacy. Some five years before, the Colonel commanding had looked into the fourteen fearless eyes of seven plump and juicy subalterns who had all applied to enter the Staff Corps, and had asked them why the three stars should he, a colonel of the Line, command a dashed nursery for double-dashed bottle-suckers who put on con-



## ONLY A SUBALTERN

demned tin spurs and rode qualified mokes at the hiatused heads of forsaken Black Regiments. He was a rude man and a terrible. Wherefore the remnant took measures (with the half-butt as an engine of public opinion) till the rumour went abroad that young men who used the Tail Twisters as a crutch to the Staff Corps had many and varied trials to endure. However, a regiment has just as much right to its own secrets as a woman.

When Bobby came up from Deolali and took his place among the Tail Twisters, it was gently but firmly borne in upon him that the Regiment was his father and his mother and his indissolubly wedded wife, and that there was no crime under the canopy of heaven blacker than that of bringing shame on the Regiment, which was the best-shooting, best-drilled, best set-up, bravest, most illustrious, and in all respects most desirable Regiment within the compass of the Seven Seas. He was taught the legends of the Mess Plate, from the great grinning Golden Gods that had come out of the Summer Palace in Peking to the silver-mounted markhor-horn snuffmull presented by the last C. O. (he who spake to the seven subalterns). And every one of those legends told him of battles fought at long odds, without fear as without support; of hospitality catholic as an Arab's; of friendships deep as the sea and steady as the fighting-line; of honour won by hard roads for honour's

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sake; and of instant and unquestioning devotion to the Regiment—the Regiment that claims the lives of all and lives forever.

More than once, too, he came officially into contact with the Regimental colours, which looked like the lining of a bricklayer's hat on the end of a chewed stick. Bobby did not kneel and worship them, because British subalterns are not constructed in that manner. Indeed, he condemned them for their weight at the very moment that they were filling him with awe and other more noble sentiments.

But best of all was the occasion when he moved with the Tail Twisters in review order at the breaking of a November day. Allowing for duty-men and sick, the Regiment was one thousand and eighty strong, and Bobby belonged to them; for was he not a Subaltern of the Line,—the whole Line and nothing but the Line,—as the tramp of two thousand one hundred and sixty sturdy ammunition boots attested? He would not have changed places with Deighton of the Horse Battery, whirling by in a pillar of cloud to a chorus of "Strong right! Strong left!" or Hogan-Yale of the White Hussars, leading his squadron for all it was worth, with the price of horseshoes thrown in; or "Tick" Boileau, trying to live up to his fierce blue and gold turban while the wasps of the Bengal Cavalry stretched to a gallop in the wake

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of the long, lollopping Walers of the White Hussars.

They fought through the clear cool day, and Bobby felt a little thrill run down his spine when he heard the *tinkle-tinkle-tinkle* of the empty cartridge-cases hopping from the breech-blocks after the roar of the volleys; for he knew that he should live to hear that sound in action. The review ended in a glorious chase across the plain — batteries thundering after cavalry to the huge disgust of the White Hussars, and the Tyneside Tail Twisters hunting a Sikh Regiment till the lean, lathy Singhs panted with exhaustion. Bobby was dusty and dripping long before noon, but his enthusiasm was merely focused — not diminished.

He returned to sit at the feet of Revere, his “skipper,” that is to say, the Captain of his Company, and to be instructed in the dark art and mystery of managing men, which is a very large part of the Profession of Arms.

“If you haven’t a taste that way,” said Revere between his puffs of his cheroot, “you’ll never be able to get the hang of it, but remember, Bobby, ’tisn’t the best drill, though drill is nearly everything, that hauls a Regiment through Hell and out on the other side. It’s the man who knows how to handle men — goat-men, swine-men, dog-men, and so on.”

“Dormer, for instance,” said Bobby; “I think

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he comes under the head of fool-men. He mopes like a sick owl."

"That 's where you make your mistake, my son. Dormer isn't a fool *yet*, but he's a dashed dirty soldier, and his room corporal makes fun of his socks before kit-inspection. Dormer, being two-thirds pure brute, goes into a corner and growls."

"How do you know?" said Bobby admiringly.

"Because a Company commander has to know these things — because, if he does *not* know, he may have crime — ay, murder — brewing under his very nose and yet not see that it's there. Dormer is being badgered out of his mind — big as he is — and he hasn't intellect enough to resent it. He's taken to quiet boozing, and, Bobby, when the butt of a room goes on the drink, or takes to moping by himself, measures are necessary to pull him out of himself."

"What measures? 'Man can't run round coddling his men for ever."

"No. The men would precious soon show him that he was not wanted. You've got to ——"

Here the Colour-sergeant entered with some papers; Bobby reflected for a while as Revere looked through the Company forms.

"Does Dormer do anything, Sergeant?" Bobby asked with the air of one continuing an interrupted conversation.

## ONLY A SUBALTERN

“No, sir. Does ’is dooty like a hortomato,” said the Sergeant, who delighted in long words. “A dirty soldier, and ’e’s under full stoppages for new kit. It’s covered with scales, sir.”

“Scales? What scales?”

“Fish-scales, sir. ’E’s always pokin’ in the mud by the river an’ a-cleanin’ them *muchly*-fish with ’is thumbs.” Revere was still absorbed in the Company papers, and the Sergeant, who was sternly fond of Bobby, continued,—“’E generally goes down there when ’e’s got ’is skiful, beggin’ your pardon, sir, an’ they *do* say that the more lush — in-be-briated ’e is, the more fish ’e catches. They call ’im the Looney Fishmonger in the Comp’ny, sir.”

Revere signed the last paper and the Sergeant retreated.

“It’s a filthy amusement,” sighed Bobby to himself. Then aloud to Revere: “Are you really worried about Dormer?”

“A little. You see he’s never mad enough to send to hospital, or drunk enough to run in, but at any minute he may flare up, brooding and sulking as he does. He resents any interest being shown in him, and the only time I took him out shooting he all but shot *me* by accident.”

“I fish,” said Bobby, with a wry face. “I hire a country-boat and go down river from Thursday to Sunday, and the amiable Dormer goes with me — if you can spare us both.”

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“You blazing young fool!” said Revere, but his heart was full of much more pleasant words.

Bobby, the Captain of a *dboni*, with Private Dormer for mate, dropped down the river on Thursday morning—the Private at the bow, the Subaltern at the helm. The Private glared uneasily at the Subaltern, who respected the reserve of the Private.

After six hours, Dormer paced to the stern, saluted, and said—“Beg y’ pardon, sir, but *was* you ever on the Durh’m Canal?”

“No,” said Bobby Wick. “Come and have some tiffin.”

They ate in silence. As the evening fell, Private Dormer broke forth, speaking to himself—

“Hi was on the Durh’m Canal, jes’ such a night, come next week twelvemonth, a-trailin’ *of* my toes in the water.” He smoked and said no more till bedtime.

The witchery of the dawn turned the gray river-reaches to purple, gold, and opal; and it was as though the lumbering *dboni* crept across the splendours of a new heaven.

Private Dormer popped his head out of his blanket and gazed at the glory below and around.

“Well—damn—my eyes!” said Private Dormer in an awed whisper. “This ’ere is like a bloom-in’ gallantry-show!” For the rest of the day he



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was dumb, but achieved an ensanguined filthiness through the cleaning of big fish.

The boat returned on Saturday evening. Dormer had been struggling with speech since noon. As the lines and luggage were being disembarked, he found tongue.

"Beg y' pardon, sir," he said, "but would you — would you min' shakin' 'ands with me, sir?"

"Of course not," said Bobby, and he shook accordingly. Dormer returned to barracks and Bobby to mess.

"He wanted a little quiet and some fishing, I think," said Bobby. "My aunt, but he's a filthy sort of animal! Have you ever seen him clean 'them *muchly*-fish with 'is thumbs'?"

"Anyhow," said Revere three weeks later, "he's doing his best to keep his things clean."

When the spring died, Bobby joined in the general scramble for Hill leave, and to his surprise and delight secured three months.

"As good a boy as I want," said Revere, the admiring skipper.

"The best of the batch," said the Adjutant to the Colonel. "Keep back that young skrimshanker Porkiss, sir, and let Revere make him sit up."

So Bobby departed joyously to Simla Pahar with a tin box of gorgeous raiment.

"'Son of Wick — old Wick of Chota-Buldana? Ask him to dinner, dear," said the aged men.



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"What a nice boy!" said the matrons and the maids.

"First-class place, Simla. Oh, ri—ipping!" said Bobby Wick, and ordered new white cord breeches on the strength of it.

"We're in a bad way," wrote Revere to Bobby at the end of two months. "Since you left, the Regiment has taken to fever and is fairly rotten with it—two hundred in hospital, about a hundred in cells—drinking to keep off fever—and the Companies on parade fifteen file strong at the outside. There's rather more sickness in the out-villages than I care for, but then I'm so blistered with prickly-heat that I'm ready to hang myself. What's the yarn about your mashing a Miss Haverley up there? Not serious, I hope? You're over-young to hang millstones round your neck, and the Colonel will turf you out of that in double-quick time if you attempt it."

It was not the Colonel that brought Bobby out of Simla, but a much more to be respected Commandant. The sickness in the out-villages spread, the Bazar was put out of bounds, and then came the news that the Tail Twisters must go into camp. The message flashed to the Hill stations.—"Cholera—Leave stopped—Officers recalled." Alas, for the white gloves in the neatly soldered boxes, the rides and the dances and picnics that were to be, the loves half spoken, and the debts

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unpaid! Without demur and without question, fast as tonga could fly or pony gallop, back to their Regiments and their Batteries, as though they were hastening to their weddings, fled the subalterns.

Bobby received his orders on returning from a dance at Viceregal Lodge, where he had —— but only the Haverley girl knows what Bobby had said or how many waltzes he had claimed for the next ball. Six in the morning saw Bobby at the Tonga Office in the drenching rain, the whirl of the last waltz still in his ears, and an intoxication due neither to wine nor waltzing in his brain.

“Good man!” shouted Deighton of the Horse Battery through the mists. “Whar you raise dat tonga? I’m coming with you. Ow! But I’ve a head and half. I didn’t sit out all night. They say the Battery’s awful bad,” and he hummed dolorously —

“Leave the what at the what’s-its-name,  
Leave the flock without shelter,  
Leave the corpse uninterred,  
Leave the bride at the altar!

“My faith! It’ll be more bally corpse than bride, though, this journey. Jump in, Bobby. Get on, *Coachwan!*”

On the Umballa platform waited a detachment of officers discussing the latest news from the

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stricken cantonment, and it was here that Bobby learned the real condition of the Tail Twisters.

"They went into camp," said an elderly Major recalled from the whist-tables at Mussoorie to a sickly Native Regiment, "they went into camp with two hundred and ten sick in carts. Two hundred and ten fever cases only, and the balance looking like so many ghosts with sore eyes. A Madras Regiment could have walked through 'em."

"But they were as fit as be-damned when I left them!" said Bobby.

"Then you'd better make them as fit as be-damned when you rejoin," said the Major brutally.

Bobby pressed his forehead against the rain-splashed window-pane as the train lumbered across the sodden Doab, and prayed for the health of the Tyneside Tail Twisters. Naini Tal had sent down her contingent with all speed; the lathering ponies of the Dalhousie Road staggered into Pathankot, taxed to the full stretch of their strength; while from cloudy Darjiling the Calcutta Mail whirled up the last straggler of the little army that was to fight a fight, in which was neither medal nor honour for the winning, against an enemy none other than "the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday."

And as each man reported himself, he said: "This is a bad business," and went about his own forthwith, for every Regiment and Battery in the

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cantonment was under canvas, the sickness bearing them company.

Bobby fought his way through the rain to the Tail Twisters' temporary mess, and Revere could have fallen on the boy's neck for the joy of seeing that ugly, wholesome phiz once more.

"Keep 'em amused and interested," said Revere. "They went on the drink, poor fools, after the first two cases, and there was no improvement. Oh, it's good to have you back, Bobby! Porkiss is a — never mind."

Deighton came over from the Artillery camp to attend a dreary mess dinner, and contributed to the general gloom by nearly weeping over the condition of his beloved Battery. Porkiss so far forgot himself as to insinuate that the presence of the officers could do no earthly good, and that the best thing would be to send the entire Regiment into hospital and "let the doctors look after them." Porkiss was demoralised with fear, nor was his peace of mind restored when Revere said coldly: "Oh! The sooner *you* go out the better, if that's your way of thinking. Any public school could send us fifty *good* men in your place, but it takes time, time, Porkiss, and money, and a certain amount of trouble, to make a Regiment. S'pose *you're* the person we go into camp for, eh?"

Whereupon Porkiss was overtaken with a great and chilly fear which a drenching in the rain did

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not allay, and, two days later, quitted this world for another where, men do fondly hope, allowances are made for the weaknesses of the flesh. The Regimental Sergeant-Major looked wearily across the Sergeants' Mess tent when the news was announced.

"There goes the worst of them," he said. "It'll take the best, and then, please God, it'll stop." The Sergeants were silent till one said: "It couldn't be *him*!" and all knew of whom Travis was thinking.

Bobby Wick stormed through the tents of his Company, rallying, rebuking, mildly, as is consistent with the Regulations, chaffing the faint-hearted; haling the sound into the watery sunlight when there was a break in the weather, and bidding them be of good cheer, for their trouble was nearly at an end; scuttling on his dun pony round the outskirts of the camp and heading back men who, with the innate perversity of British soldiers, were always wandering into infected villages, or drinking deeply from rain-flooded marshes; comforting the panic-stricken with rude speech, and more than once tending the dying who had no friends — the men without "townies"; organizing, with banjos and burnt cork, Sing-songs which should allow the talent of the Regiment full play; and generally, as he explained, "playing the giddy garden-goat all round."

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“You’re worth half a dozen of us, Bobby,” said Revere in a moment of enthusiasm. “How the devil do you keep it up?”

Bobby made no answer, but had Revere looked into the breast-pocket of his coat he might have seen there a sheaf of badly-written letters which perhaps accounted for the power that possessed the boy. A letter came to Bobby every other day. The spelling was not above reproach, but the sentiments must have been most satisfactory, for on receipt Bobby’s eyes softened marvellously, and he was wont to fall into a tender abstraction for a while ere, shaking his cropped head, he charged into his work.

By what power he drew after him the hearts of the roughest, and the Tail Twisters counted in their ranks some rough diamonds indeed, was a mystery to both skipper and C. O., who learned from the regimental chaplain that Bobby was considerably more in request in the hospital tents than the Reverend John Emery.

“The men seem fond of you. Are you in the hospitals much?” said the Colonel, who did his daily round and ordered the men to get well with a hardness that did not cover his bitter grief.

“A little, sir,” said Bobby.

“’Shouldn’t go there too often if I were you. They say it’s not contagious, but there’s no use



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in running unnecessary risks. We can't afford to have you down, y' know."

Six days later, it was with the utmost difficulty that the post-runner plashed his way out to the camp with the mail-bags, for the rain was falling in torrents. Bobby received a letter, bore it off to his tent, and, the programme for the next week's Sing-song being satisfactorily disposed of, sat down to answer it. For an hour the unhandy pen toiled over the paper, and where sentiment rose to more than normal tide-level, Bobby Wick stuck out his tongue and breathed heavily. He was not used to letter-writing.

"Beg y' pardon, sir," said a voice at the tent door; "but Dormer's 'orrid bad, sir, an' they've taken him orf, sir."

"Damn Private Dormer and you too!" said Bobby Wick, running the blotter over the half-finished letter. "Tell him I'll come in the morning."

"'E's awful bad, sir," said the voice hesitatingly. There was an undecided squelching of heavy boots.

"Well?" said Bobby impatiently.

"Excusin' 'imself before 'and for takin' the liberty, 'e says it would be a comfort for to assist 'im, sir, if ——"

"*Tattoo lao!* Get my pony! Here, come in out of the rain till I'm ready. What blasted nuisances you are! That's brandy. Drink some; you want



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it. Hang on to my stirrup and tell me if I go too fast."

Strengthened by a four-finger "nip" which he swallowed without a wink, the Hospital Orderly kept up with the slipping, mud-stained, and very disgusted pony as it shambled to the hospital tent.

Private Dormer was certainly "'orrid bad." He had all but reached the stage of collapse, and was not pleasant to look upon.

"What's this, Dormer?" said Bobby, bending over the man. "You're not going out this time. You've got to come fishing with me once or twice more yet."

The blue lips parted and in the ghost of a whisper said,— "Beg y' pardon, sir, disturbin' of you now, but would you min' 'oldin' my 'and, sir?"

Bobby sat on the side of the bed, and the icy-cold hand closed on his own like a vice, forcing a lady's ring which was on the little finger deep into the flesh. Bobby set his lips and waited, the water dripping from the hem of his trousers. An hour passed, and the grasp of the hand did not relax, nor did the expression of the drawn face change. Bobby with infinite craft lit himself a cheroot with the left hand (his right arm was numbed to the elbow), and resigned himself to a night of pain.

Dawn showed a very white-faced Subaltern sit-

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ting on the side of a sick man's cot, and a Doctor in the doorway using language unfit for publication.

"Have you been here all night, you young ass?" said the Doctor.

"There or thereabouts," said Bobby ruefully. "He's frozen on to me."

Dormer's mouth shut with a click. He turned his head and sighed. The clinging hand opened, and Bobby's arm fell useless at his side.

"He'll do," said the Doctor quietly. "It must have been a toss-up all through the night. 'Think you're to be congratulated on this case.'"

"Oh, bosh!" said Bobby. "I thought the man had gone out long ago—only—only I didn't care to take my hand away. Rub my arm down, there's a good chap. What a grip the brute has! I'm chilled to the marrow!" He passed out of the tent shivering.

Private Dormer was allowed to celebrate his repulse of Death by strong waters. Four days later, he sat on the side of his cot and said to the patients mildly: "I'd 'a' liken to 'a' spoken to 'im—so I should."

But at that time Bobby was reading yet another letter,—he had the most persistent correspondent of any man in camp,—and was even then about to write that the sickness had abated, and in another week at the outside would be gone. He

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did not intend to say that the chill of a sick man's hand seemed to have struck into the heart whose capacities for affection he dwelt on at such length. He did intend to enclose the illustrated programme of the forthcoming Sing-song, whereof he was not a little proud. He also intended to write on many other matters which do not concern us, and doubtless would have done so but for the slight feverish headache which made him dull and unresponsive at mess.

"You are overdoing it, Bobby," said his skipper. "'Might give the rest of us credit of doing a little work. You go on as if you were the whole Mess rolled into one. Take it easy."

"I will," said Bobby. "I'm feeling done up, somehow." Revere looked at him anxiously and said nothing.

There was a flickering of lanterns about the camp that night, and a rumour that brought men out of their cots to the tent doors, a paddling of the naked feet of doolie-bearers, and the rush of a galloping horse.

"Wot's up?" asked twenty tents; and through twenty tents ran the answer—"Wick, 'e's down."

They brought the news to Revere and he groaned. "Any one but Bobby and I shouldn't have cared! The Sergeant-Major was right."

"Not going out this journey," gasped Bobby, as he was lifted from the doolie. "Not going out

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“this journey.” Then with an air of supreme conviction — “I *can't*, you see.”

“Not if I can do anything!” said the Surgeon-Major, who had hastened over from the mess where he had been dining.

He and the Regimental Surgeon fought together with Death for the life of Bobby Wick. Their work was interrupted by a hairy apparition in a blue-gray dressing-gown, who stared in horror at the bed and cried — “Oh, my Gawd! It can't be *'im!*” until an indignant Hospital Orderly whisked him away.

If care of man and desire to live could have done aught, Bobby would have been saved. As it was, he made a fight of three days, and the Surgeon-Major's brow uncreased. “We'll save him yet,” he said; and the Surgeon, who, though he ranked with the Captain, had a very youthful heart, went out upon the word and pranced joyously in the mud.

“Not going out this journey,” whispered Bobby Wick gallantly, at the end of the third day.

“Bravo!” said the Surgeon-Major. “That's the way to look at it, Bobby.”

As evening fell a gray shade gathered round Bobby's mouth, and he turned his face to the tent-wall wearily. The Surgeon-Major frowned.

“I'm awfully tired,” said Bobby, very faintly.

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“What’s the use of bothering me with medicine? I — don’t — want — it. Let me alone.”

The desire for life had departed, and Bobby was content to drift away on the easy tide of Death.

“It’s no good,” said the Surgeon-Major. “He doesn’t want to live. He’s meeting it, poor child.” And he blew his nose.

Half a mile away, the regimental band was playing the overture to the Sing-song, for the men had been told that Bobby was out of danger. The clash of the brass and the wail of the horns reached Bobby’s ears.

Is there a single joy or pain,  
That I should never know?  
You do not love me, ’tis in vain,  
Bid me good-bye and go!

An expression of hopeless irritation crossed the boy’s face, and he tried to shake his head.

The Surgeon-Major bent down — “What is it, Bobby?” — “Not that waltz,” muttered Bobby. “That’s our own — our very ownest own. . . . Mummy dear.”

With this he sank into the stupor that gave place to death early next morning.

Revere, his eyes red at the rims and his nose very white, went into Bobby’s tent to write a letter to Papa Wick which should bow the white head of the ex-Commissioner of Chota-Buldana in the

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keenest sorrow of his life. Bobby's little store of papers lay in confusion on the table, and among them a half-finished letter. The last sentence ran: "So you see, darling, there is really no fear, because as long as I know you care for me and I care for you, nothing can touch me."

Revere stayed in the tent for an hour. When he came out, his eyes were redder than ever.

Private Conklin sat on a turned-down bucket, and listened to a not unfamiliar tune. Private Conklin was a convalescent and should have been tenderly treated.

"Ho!" said Private Conklin. "There's another bloomin' orf'cer da—ed."

The bucket shot from under him, and his eyes filled with a smithyful of sparks. A tall man in a blue-gray bedgown was regarding him with deep disfavour.

"You ought to take shame for yourself, Conky! Orf'cer? — bloomin' orf'cer? I'll learn you to misname the likes of 'im. Hangel! *Bloomin'* Hangel! That's wot 'e is!"

And the Hospital Orderly was so satisfied with the justice of the punishment that he did not even order Private Dörner back to his cot.

## IN THE MATTER OF A PRIVATE

Hurrah! hurrah! a soldier's life for me!

Shout, boys, shout! for it makes you jolly and free.

*The Ramrod Corps.*

PEOPLE who have seen say that one of the quaintest spectacles of human frailty is an outbreak of hysterics in a girls' school. It starts without warning, generally on a hot afternoon, among the elder pupils. A girl giggles till the giggle gets beyond control. Then she throws up her head and cries, "*Honk, bonk, bonk,*" like a wild goose, and tears mix with the laughter. If the mistress be wise, she will rap out something severe at this point to check matters. If she be tender-hearted, and send for a drink of water, the chances are largely in favour of another girl laughing at the afflicted one and herself collapsing. Thus the trouble spreads, and may end in half of what answers to the Lower Sixth of a boys' school rocking and whooping together. Given a week of warm weather, two stately promenades per diem, a heavy mutton and rice meal in the middle of the day, a certain amount of nagging from the teachers, and a few other



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things, some amazing effects develop. At least, this is what folk say who have had experience.

Now, the Mother Superior of a Convent and the Colonel of a British Infantry Regiment would be justly shocked at any comparison being made between their respective charges. But it is a fact that, under certain circumstances, Thomas in bulk can be worked up into ditthering, rippling hysteria. He does not weep, but he shows his trouble unmistakably, and the consequences get into the newspapers, and all the good people who hardly know a Martini from a Snider say: "Take away the brute's ammunition!"

Thomas isn't a brute, and his business, which is to look after the virtuous people, demands that he shall have his ammunition to his hand. He doesn't wear silk stockings, and he really ought to be supplied with a new Adjective to help him to express his opinions: but, for all that, he is a great man. If you call him "the heroic defender of the national honour" one day, and "a brutal and licentious soldiery" the next, you naturally bewilder him, and he looks upon you with suspicion. There is nobody to speak for Thomas except people who have theories to work off on him, and nobody understands Thomas except Thomas, and he does not always know what is the matter with himself.

That is the prologue. This is the story:—

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Corporal Slane was engaged to be married to Miss Jhansi M'Kenna, whose history is well known in the regiment and elsewhere. He had his Colonel's permission, and, being popular with the men, every arrangement had been made to give the wedding what Private Ortheris called "eeklar." It fell in the heart of the hot weather, and, after the wedding, Slane was going up to the Hills with the bride. None the less, Slane's grievance was that the affair would be only a hired-carriage wedding, and he felt that the "eeklar" of that was meagre. Miss M'Kenna did not care so much. The Sergeant's wife was helping her to make her wedding-dress, and she was very busy. Slane was, just then, the only moderately contented man in barracks. All the rest were more or less miserable.

And they had so much to make them happy, too. All their work was over at eight in the morning, and for the rest of the day they could lie on their backs and smoke Canteen-plug and swear at the punkah-coolies. They enjoyed a fine, full flesh meal in the middle of the day, and then threw themselves down on their cots and sweated and slept till it was cool enough to go out with their "towny," whose vocabulary contained less than six hundred words, and the Adjective, and whose views on every conceivable question they had heard many times before.

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There was the Canteen, of course, and there was the Temperance Room with the second-hand papers in it; but a man of any profession cannot read for eight hours a day in a temperature of  $96^{\circ}$  or  $98^{\circ}$  in the shade, running up sometimes to  $103^{\circ}$  at midnight. Very few men, even though they get a pannikin of flat, stale, muddy beer and hide it under their cots, can continue drinking for six hours a day. One man tried, but he died, and nearly the whole regiment went to his funeral because it gave them something to do. It was too early for the excitement of fever or cholera. The men could only wait and wait and wait, and watch the shadow of the barrack creeping across the blinding white dust. That was a gay life.

They lounged about cantonments—it was too hot for any sort of game, and almost too hot for vice—and fuddled themselves in the evening, and filled themselves to distension with the healthy nitrogenous food provided for them, and the more they stoked the less exercise they took and more explosive they grew. Then tempers began to wear away, and men fell a-brooding over insults real or imaginary, for they had nothing else to think of. The tone of the repartees changed, and instead of saying light-heartedly: “I’ll knock your silly face in,” men grew laboriously polite and hinted that the cantonments were

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not big enough for themselves and their enemy, and that there would be more space for one of the two in another Place.

It may have been the Devil who arranged the thing, but the fact of the case is that Losson had for a long time been worrying Simmons in an aimless way. It gave him occupation. The two had their cots side by side, and would sometimes spend a long afternoon swearing at each other; but Simmons was afraid of Losson and dared not challenge him to a fight. He thought over the words in the hot still nights, and half the hate he felt towards Losson he vented on the wretched punkah-coolie.

Losson bought a parrot in the bazar, and put it into a little cage, and lowered the cage into the cool darkness of a well, and sat on the well-curb, shouting bad language down to the parrot. He taught it to say: "Simmons, ye *so-oor*," which means swine, and several other things entirely unfit for publication. He was a big gross man, and he shook like a jelly when the parrot had the sentence correctly. Simmons, however, shook with rage, for all the room were laughing at him—the parrot was such a disreputable puff of green feathers and it looked so human when it chattered. Losson used to sit, swinging his fat legs, on the side of the cot, and ask the parrot what it thought of Simmons. The parrot would answer: "Sim-

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mons, ye *so-oor*." "Good boy," Losson used to say, scratching the parrot's head; "ye 'ear that, Sim?" And Simmons used to turn over on his stomach and make answer: "I 'ear. Take 'eed *you* don't 'ear something one of these days."

In the restless nights, after he had been asleep all day, fits of blind rage came upon Simmons and held him till he trembled all over, while he thought in how many different ways he would slay Losson. Sometimes he would picture himself trampling the life out of the man with heavy ammunition-boots, and at others smashing in his face with the butt, and at others jumping on his shoulders and dragging the head back till the neckbone cracked. Then his mouth would feel hot and fevered, and he would reach out for another sup of the beer in the pannikin.

But the fancy that came to him most frequently and stayed with him longest was one connected with the great roll of fat under Losson's right ear. He noticed it first on a moonlight night, and thereafter it was always before his eyes. It was a fascinating roll of fat. A man could get his hand upon it and tear away one side of the neck; or he could place the muzzle of a rifle on it and blow away all the head in a flash. Losson had no right to be sleek and contented and well-to-do, when he, Simmons, was the butt of the room. Some day, perhaps, he would show those who

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laughed at the "Simmons, ye *so-oor*" joke, that he was as good as the rest, and held a man's life in the crook of his forefinger. When Losson snored, Simmons hated him more bitterly than ever. Why should Losson be able to sleep when Simmons had to stay awake hour after hour, tossing and turning on the tapes, with the dull liver pain gnawing into his right side and his head throbbing and aching after Canteen? He thought over this for many, many nights, and the world became unprofitable to him. He even blunted his naturally fine appetite with beer and tobacco; and all the while the parrot talked at and made a mock of him.

The heat continued and the tempers wore away more quickly than before. A Sergeant's wife died of heat-apoplexy in the night, and the rumour ran abroad that it was cholera. Men rejoiced openly, hoping that it would spread and send them into camp. But that was a false alarm.

It was late on a Tuesday evening, and the men were waiting in the deep double verandahs for "Last Post," when Simmons went to the box at the foot of his bed, took out his pipe, and slammed the lid down with a bang that echoed through the deserted barrack like the crack of a rifle. Ordinarily speaking, the men would have taken no notice; but their nerves were fretted to fiddle-strings. They jumped up, and three or four clat-

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tered into the barrack-room only to find Simmons kneeling by his box.

“Ow! It’s you, is it?” they said, and laughed foolishly. “We thought ’twas ——”

Simmons rose slowly. If the accident had so shaken his fellows, what would not the reality do?

“You thought it was—did you? And what makes you think?” he said, lashing himself into madness as he went on; “to Hell with your thinking, ye dirty spies!”

“Simmons, ye *so-oor*,” chuckled the parrot in the verandah sleepily, recognising a well-known voice. Now that was absolutely all.

The tension snapped. Simmons fell back on the arm-rack deliberately,—the men were at the far end of the room,—and took out his rifle and packet of ammunition. “Don’t go playing the goat, Sim!” said Losson. “Put it down,” but there was a quaver in his voice. Another man stooped, slipped his boot, and hurled it at Simmons’s head. The prompt answer was a shot which, fired at random, found its billet in Losson’s throat. Losson fell forward without a word, and the others scattered.

“You thought it was!” yelled Simmons. “You’re drivin’ me to it! I tell you you’re drivin’ me to it! Get up, Losson, an’ don’t lie shammin’ there—you an’ your blasted parrit that druv me to it!”



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But there was an unaffected reality about Losson's pose that showed Simmons what he had done. The men were still clamouring in the verandah. Simmons appropriated two more packets of ammunition and ran into the moonlight, muttering: "I'll make a night of it. Thirty roun's, an' the last for myself. Take you that, you dogs!"

He dropped on one knee and fired into the brown of the men on the verandah, but the bullet flew high, and landed in the brickwork with a vicious *phwit* that made some of the younger ones turn pale. It is, as musketry theorists observe, one thing to fire and another to be fired at.

Then the instinct of the chase flared up. The news spread from barrack to barrack, and the men doubled out intent on the capture of Simmons, the wild beast, who was heading for the Cavalry parade-ground, stopping now and again to send back a shot and a curse in the direction of his pursuers.

"I'll learn you to spy on me!" he shouted; "I'll learn you to give me dorg's names! Come on, the 'ole lot o' you! Colonel John Anthony Deever, C. B.!"—he turned towards the Infantry Mess and shook his rifle—"you think yourself the devil of a man—but I tell you that if you put your ugly old carcass outside o' that door, I'll make you the poorest-lookin' man in the army. Come out, Colonel John Anthony Deever, C. B.! Come out and see me practiss on the rainge. I'm

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the crack shot of the 'ole bloomin' battalion." In proof of which statement Simmons fired at the lighted windows of the mess-house.

"Private Simmons, E Comp'ny, on the Cavalry p'rade-ground, Sir, with thirty rounds," said a Sergeant breathlessly to the Colonel. "Shootin' right and lef', Sir. Shot Private Losson. What's to be done, Sir?"

Colonel John Anthony Deever, C. B., sallied out, only to be saluted by a spurt of dust at his feet.

"Pull up!" said the Second in Command; "I don't want my step in that way, Colonel. He's as dangerous as a mad dog."

"Shoot him like one, then," said the Colonel bitterly, "if he won't take his chance. *My* regiment, too! If it had been the Towheads I could have understood."

Private Simmons had occupied a strong position near a well on the edge of the parade-ground, and was defying the regiment to come on. The regiment was not anxious to comply, for there is small honour in being shot by a fellow-private. Only Corporal Slane, rifle in hand, threw himself down on the ground, and wormed his way towards the well.

"Don't shoot," said he to the men round him; "like as not you'll 'it me. I'll catch the beggar livin'."

Simmons ceased shouting for a while, and the

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noise of trap-wheels could be heard across the plain. Major Oldyne, Commanding the Horse Battery, was coming back from a dinner in the Civil Lines; was driving after his usual custom—that is to say, as fast as the horse could go.

“A orficer! A blooming spangled orficer!” shrieked Simmons; “I’ll make a scarecrow of that orficer!” The trap stopped.

“What’s this?” demanded the Major of Gunners. “You there, drop your rifle.”

“Why, it’s Jerry Blazes! I ain’t got no quarrel with you, Jerry Blazes. Pass, frien’, an’ all’s well!”

But Jerry Blazes had not the faintest intention of passing a dangerous murderer. He was, as his adoring Battery swore long and fervently, without knowledge of fear, and they were surely the best judges, for Jerry Blazes, it was notorious, had done his possible to kill a man each time the Battery went out.

He walked towards Simmons, with the intention of rushing him and knocking him down.

“Don’t make me do it, Sir,” said Simmons; “I ain’t got nothing ag’in’ you. Ah! you would?”—the Major broke into a run—“Take that, then!”

The Major dropped with a bullet through his shoulder, and Simmons stood over him. He had lost the satisfaction of killing Losson in the desired way—but here was a helpless body to his

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hand. Should he slip in another cartridge, and blow off the head, or with the butt smash in the white face? He stopped to consider, and a cry went up from the far side of the parade-ground: "He's killed Jerry Blazes!" But in the shelter of the well-pillars Simmons was safe, 'except when he stepped out to fire. "I'll blow yer 'andsome 'ead off, Jerry Blazes," said Simmons reflectively. "Six and three is nine an' one is ten, an' that leaves me another nineteen, an' one for myself." He tugged at the string of the second packet of ammunition. Corporal Slane crawled out of the shadow of a bank into the moonlight.

"I see you!" said Simmons. "Come a bit further on an' I'll do for you."

"I'm comin'," said Corporal Slane briefly; "you've done a bad day's work, Sim. Come out 'ere an' come back with me."

"Come to ——," laughed Simmons, sending a cartridge home with his thumb. "Not before I've settled you an' Jerry Blazes."

The Corporal was lying at full length in the dust of the parade-ground, a rifle under him. Some of the less cautious men in the distance shouted: "Shoot 'im! Shoot 'im, Slane!"

"You move 'and or foot, Slane," said Simmons, "an' I'll kick Jerry Blazes' 'ead in, and shoot you after."

"I ain't movin'," said the Corporal, raising his

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head; "you daren't 'it a man on 'is legs. Let go o' Jerry Blazes an' come out o' that with your fistes. Come an' 'it me. You daren't, you bloom-in' dog-shooter!"

"I dare."

"You lie, you man-sticker. You sneakin', Sheeny butcher, you lie. See there!" Slane kicked the rifle away, and stood up in the peril of his life. "Come on, now!"

The temptation was more than Simmons could resist, for the Corporal in his white clothes offered a perfect mark.

"Don't misname me," shouted Simmons, firing as he spoke. The shot missed, and the shooter, blind with rage, threw his rifle down and rushed at Slane from the protection of the well. Within striking distance, he kicked savagely at Slane's stomach, but the weedy Corporal knew something of Simmons's weakness, and knew, too, the deadly guard for that kick. Bowing forward and drawing up his right leg till the heel of the right foot was set some three inches above the inside of the left knee-cap, he met the blow standing on one leg — exactly as Gonds stand when they meditate — and ready for the fall that would follow. There was an oath, the Corporal fell over to his own left as shinbone met shinbone, and the Private collapsed, his right leg broken an inch above the ankle.

"'Pity you don't know that guard, Sim," said

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Slane, spitting out the dust as he rose. Then raising his voice — “Come an’ take him orf. I’ve bruk ’is leg.” This was not strictly true, for the Private had accomplished his own downfall, since it is the special merit of that leg-guard that the harder the kick the greater the kicker’s discomfiture.

Slane walked to Jerry Blazes and hung over him with ostentatious anxiety, while Simmons, weeping with pain, was carried away. “’Ope you ain’t ’urt badly, Sir,” said Slane. The Major had fainted, and there was an ugly, ragged hole through the top of his arm. Slane knelt down and murmured: “S’elp me, I believe ’e’s dead. Well, if that ain’t my blooming luck all over!”

But the Major was destined to lead his Battery afield for many a long day with unshaken nerve. He was removed, and nursed and petted into convalescence, while the Battery discussed the wisdom of capturing Simmons and blowing him from a gun. They idolised their Major, and his reappearance on parade brought about a scene nowhere provided for in the Army Regulations.

Great, too, was the glory that fell to Slane’s share. The Gunners would have made him drunk thrice a day for at least a fortnight. Even the Colonel of his own regiment complimented him upon his coolness, and the local paper called him a hero. These things did not puff him up. When

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the Major offered him money and thanks, the virtuous Corporal took the one and put aside the other. But he had a request to make and prefaced it with many a "Beg y' pardon, Sir." Could the Major see his way to letting the Slane-M'Kenna wedding be adorned by the presence of four Battery horses to pull a hired barouche? The Major could, and so could the Battery. Excessively so. It was a gorgeous wedding.

. . . . .

"Wot did I do it for?" said Corporal Slane. "For the 'orses o' course. Jhansi ain't a beauty to look at, but I wasn't goin' to 'ave a hired turnout. Jerry Blazes? If I 'adn't 'a' wanted something, Sim might ha' blowed Jerry Blazes' blooming 'ead into Hirish stew for aught I'd 'a' cared."

And they hanged Private Simmons—hanged him as high as Haman in hollow square of the regiment; and tne Colonel said it was Drink; and the Chaplain was sure it was the Devil; and Simmons fancied it was both, but he didn't know, and only hoped his fate would be a warning to his companions; and half a dozen "intelligent publicists" wrote six beautiful leading articles on "The Prevalence of Crime in the Army."

But not a soul thought of comparing the "bloody-minded Simmons" to the squawking, gaping school-girl with which this story opens.



## THE LOST LEGION

WHEN the Indian Mutiny broke out, and a little time before the siege of Delhi, a regiment of Native Irregular Horse was stationed at Peshawur on the frontier of India. That regiment caught what John Lawrence called at the time "the prevalent mania," and would have thrown in its lot with the mutineers, had it been allowed to do so. The chance never came, for, as the regiment swept off down south, it was headed off by a remnant of an English corps into the hills of Afghanistan, and there the newly conquered tribesmen turned against it as wolves turn against buck. It was hunted for the sake of its arms and accoutrements from hill to hill, from ravine to ravine, up and down the dried beds of rivers and round the shoulders of bluffs, till it disappeared as water sinks in the sand — this officerless rebel regiment. The only trace left of its existence to-day is a nominal roll drawn up in neat round hand and countersigned by an officer who called himself, "Adjutant, late — Irregular Cavalry." The paper is yellow with years and dirt, but on the back of it you can still read a pencil-note by John Lawrence, to this ef-

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fect: "See that the two native officers who remained loyal are not deprived of their estates.—J. L." Of six hundred and fifty sabres only two stood strain, and John Lawrence in the midst of all the agony of the first months of the Mutiny found time to think about their merits.

That was more than thirty years ago, and the tribesmen across the Afghan border who helped to annihilate the regiment are now old men. Sometimes a graybeard speaks of his share in the massacre. "They came," he will say, "across the border, very proud, calling upon us to rise and kill the English, and go down to the sack of Delhi. But we who had just been conquered by the same English knew that they were over-bold, and that the Government could account easily for those down-country dogs. This Hindustani regiment, therefore, we treated with fair words, and kept standing in one place till the redcoats came after them very hot and angry. Then this regiment ran forward a little more into our hills to avoid the wrath of the English, and we lay upon their flanks watching from the sides of the hills till we were well assured that their path was lost behind them. Then we came down, for we desired their clothes, and their bridles, and their rifles, and their boots—more especially their boots. That was a great killing—done slowly." Here the old man will rub his nose, and shake his long snaky

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locks, and lick his bearded lips, and grin till the yellow tooth-stumps show. "Yea, we killed them because we needed their gear, and we knew that their lives had been forfeited to God on account of their sin—the sin of treachery to the salt which they had eaten. They rode up and down the valleys, stumbling and rocking in their saddles, and howling for mercy. We drove them slowly like cattle till they were all assembled in one place, the flat wide valley of Sheor Kôt. Many had died from want of water, but there still were many left, and they could not make any stand. We went among them pulling them down with our hands two at a time, and our boys killed them who were new to the sword. My share of the plunder was such and such — so many guns, and so many saddles. The guns were good in those days. Now we steal the Government rifles, and despise smooth barrels. Yes, beyond doubt we wiped that regiment from off the face of the earth, and even the memory of the deed is now dying. But men say ——"

At this point the tale would stop abruptly, and it was impossible to find out what men said across the border. The Afghans were always a secretive race, and vastly preferred doing something wicked to saying anything at all. They would be quiet and well-behaved for months, till one night, without word or warning, they would rush a police-

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post, cut the throats of a constable or two, dash through a village, carry away three or four women, and withdraw, in the red glare of burning thatch, driving the cattle and goats before them to their own desolate hills. The Indian Government would become almost tearful on these occasions. First it would say, "Please be good and we'll forgive you." The tribe concerned in the latest depredation would collectively put its thumb to its nose and answer rudely. Then the Government would say: "Hadn't you better pay up a little money for those few corpses you left behind you the other night?" Here the tribe would temporise, and lie and bully, and some of the younger men, merely to show contempt of authority, would raid another police-post and fire into some frontier mud-fort, and, if lucky, kill a real English officer. Then the Government would say:—"Observe; if you really persist in this line of conduct, you will be hurt." If the tribe knew exactly what was going on in India, it would apologise or be rude, according as it learned whether the Government was busy with other things or able to devote its full attention to their performances. Some of the tribes knew to one corpse how far to go. Others became excited, lost their heads, and told the Government to come on. With sorrow and tears, and one eye on the British taxpayer at home, who insisted on regarding these exercises

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as brutal wars of annexation, the Government would prepare an expensive little field-brigade and some guns, and send all up into the hills to chase the wicked tribe out of the valleys, where the corn grew, into the hill-tops, where there was nothing to eat. The tribe would turn out in full strength and enjoy the campaign, for they knew that their women would never be touched, that their wounded would be nursed, not mutilated, and that as soon as each man's bag of corn was spent they could surrender and palaver with the English General as though they had been a real enemy. Afterwards, years afterwards, they would pay the blood-money, driblet by driblet, to the Government, and tell their children how they had slain the redcoats by thousands. The only drawback to this kind of picnic-war was the weakness of the redcoats for solemnly blowing up with powder their fortified towers and keeps. This the tribes always considered mean.

Chief among the leaders of the smaller tribes — the little clans who knew to a penny the expense of moving white troops against them — was a priest-bandit-chief whom we will call the Gulla Kutta Mullah. His enthusiasm for Border murder as an art was almost dignified. He would cut down a mail-runner from pure wantonness, or bombard a mud-fort with rifle-fire when he knew that our men needed to sleep. In his leisure moments he would

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go on circuit among his neighbours, and try to incite other tribes to devilry. Also, he kept a kind of hotel for fellow-outlaws in his own village, which lay in a valley called Bersund. Any respectable murderer on that section of the frontier was sure to lie up at Bersund, for it was reckoned an exceedingly safe place. The sole entry to it ran through a narrow gorge which could be converted into a death-trap in five minutes. It was surrounded by high hills, reckoned inaccessible to all save born mountaineers, and here the Gulla Kutta Mullah lived in great state, the head of a colony of mud and stone huts, and in each mud hut hung some portion of a red uniform and the plunder of dead men. The Government particularly wished for his capture, and once invited him formally to come out and be hanged on account of the many murders in which he had taken a direct part. He replied:—

“I am only twenty miles, as the crow flies, from your border. Come and fetch me.”

“Some day we will come,” said the Government, “and hanged you will be.”

The Gulla Kutta Mullah let the matter slip from his mind. He knew that the patience of the Government was as long as a summer day; but he did not realise that its arm was as long as a winter night. Months afterwards, when there was peace on the border, and all India was quiet, the Indian

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Government turned in its sleep and remembered the Gulla Kutta Mullah at Bersund, with his thirteen outlaws. The movement against him of one single regiment—which the telegrams would have translated as war—would have been highly impolitic. This was a time for silence and speed, and, above all, absence of bloodshed.

You must know that all along the north-west frontier of India there is spread a force of some thirty thousand foot and horse, whose duty it is to quietly and unostentatiously shepherd the tribes in front of them. They move up and down, and down and up, from one desolate little post to another; they are ready to take the field at ten minutes' notice; they are always half in and half out of a difficulty somewhere along the monotonous line; their lives are as hard as their own muscles, and the papers never say anything about them. It was from this force that the Government picked its men.

One night, at a station where the mounted Night Patrol fire as they challenge, and the wheat rolls in great blue-green waves under our cold northern moon, the officers were playing billiards in the mud-walled club-house, when orders came to them that they were to go on parade at once for a night-drill. They grumbled, and went to turn out their men—a hundred English troops, let us say, two hundred Goorkhas, and about a hundred cavalry of the finest native cavalry in the world.



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When they were on the parade-ground, it was explained to them in whispers that they must set off at once across the hills to Bersund. The English troops were to post themselves round the hills at the side of the valley; the Goorkhas would command the gorge and the death-trap, and the cavalry would fetch a long march round and get to the back of the circle of hills, whence, if there were any difficulty, they could charge down on the Mullah's men. But orders were very strict that there should be no fighting and no noise. They were to return in the morning with every round of ammunition intact, and the Mullah and the thirteen outlaws bound in their midst. If they were successful, no one would know or care anything about their work; but failure meant probably a small border war, in which the Gulla Kutta Mullah would pose as a popular leader against a big bullying power, instead of a common Border murderer.

Then there was silence, broken only by the clicking of the compass-needles and snapping of watch-cases, as the heads of columns compared bearings and made appointments for the rendezvous. Five minutes later the parade-ground was empty; the green coats of the Goorkhas and the overcoats of the English troops had faded into the darkness, and the cavalry were cantering away in the face of a blinding drizzle.

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What the Goorkhas and the English did will be seen later on. The heavy work lay with the horses, for they had to go far and pick their way clear of habitations. Many of the troopers were natives of that part of the world, ready and anxious to fight against their kin, and some of the officers had made private and unofficial excursions into those hills before. They crossed the border, found a dried river-bed, cantered up that, walked through a stony gorge, risked crossing a low hill under cover of the darkness, skirted another hill, leaving their hoof-marks deep in some ploughed ground, felt their way along another water-course, ran over the neck of a spur praying that no one would hear their horses grunting, and so worked on in the rain and the darkness till they had left Bersund and its crater of hills a little behind them, and to the left, and it was time to swing round. The ascent commanding the back of Bersund was steep, and they halted to draw breath in a broad level valley below the height. That is to say, the men reined up, but the horses, blown as they were, refused to halt. There was unchristian language, the worse for being delivered in a whisper, and you heard the saddles squeaking in the darkness as the horses plunged.

The subaltern at the rear of one troop turned in his saddle and said very softly:—

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"Carter, what the blessed heavens are you doing at the rear? Bring your men up, man."

There was no answer, till a trooper replied:—

"Carter Sahib is forward — not here. There is nothing behind us."

"There is," said the subaltern. "The squadron's walking on its own tail."

Then the Major in command moved down to the rear, swearing softly and asking for the blood of Lieutenant Halley — the subaltern who had just spoken.

"Look after your rearguard," said the Major. "Some of your infernal thieves have got lost. They're at the head of the squadron, and you're a several kinds of idiot."

"Shall I tell off my men, sir?" said the subaltern sulkily, for he was feeling wet and cold.

"Tell 'em off!" said the Major. "*Whip* 'em off, by Gad! You're squandering them all over the place. There's a troop behind you *now*!"

"So I was thinking," said the subaltern calmly. "I have all my men here, sir. Better speak to Carter."

"Carter Sahib sends salaam and wants to know why the regiment is stopping," said a trooper to Lieutenant Halley.

"Where under heaven *is* Carter," said the Major.

"Forward with his troop," was the answer.

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"Are we walking in a ring, then, or are we the centre of a blessed brigade?" said the Major.

By this time there was silence all along the column. The horses were still; but, through the drive of the fine rain, men could hear the feet of many horses moving over stony ground.

"We're being stalked," said Lieutenant Halley.

"They've no horses here. Besides they'd have fired before this," said the Major. "It's — it's villagers' ponies."

"Then our horses would have neighed and spoilt the attack long ago. They must have been near us for half an hour," said the subaltern.

"Queer that we can't smell the horses," said the Major, damping his finger and rubbing it on his nose as he sniffed up wind.

"Well, it's a bad start," said the subaltern, shaking the wet from his overcoat. "What shall we do, sir?"

"Get on," said the Major. "We shall catch it to-night."

The column moved forward very gingerly for a few paces. Then there was an oath, a shower of blue sparks as shod hooves crashed on small stones, and a man rolled over with a jangle of accoutrements that would have waked the dead.

"Now we've gone and done it," said Lieutenant Halley. "All the hillside awake and all the hillside to climb in the face of musketry-

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fire! This comes of trying to do night-hawk work."

The trembling trooper picked himself up and tried to explain that his horse had fallen over one of the little cairns that are built of loose stones on the spot where a man has been murdered. There was no need to give reasons. The Major's big Australian charger blundered next, and the column came to a halt in what seemed to be a very graveyard of little cairns, all about two feet high. The manœuvres of the squadron are not reported. Men said that it felt like mounted quadrilles without training and without the music; but at last the horses, breaking rank and choosing their own way, walked clear of the cairns, till every man of the squadron reformed and drew rein a few yards up the slope of the hill. Then, according to Lieutenant Halley, there was another scene very like the one which has been described. The Major and Carter insisted that all the men had not joined rank, and that there were more of them in the rear, clicking and blundering among the dead men's cairns. Lieutenant Halley told off his own troopers again and resigned himself to wait. Later on he said to me:

"I didn't much know and I didn't much care what was going on. The row of that trooper falling ought to have scared half the country, and I would take my oath that we were being stalked

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by a full regiment in the rear, and *they* were making row enough to rouse all Afghanistan. I sat tight, but nothing happened."

The mysterious part of the night's work was the silence on the hillside. Everybody knew that the Gulla Kutta Mullah had his outpost-huts on the reverse side of the hill, and everybody expected, by the time that the Major had sworn himself into quiet, that the watchmen there would open fire. When nothing happened, they said that the gusts of the rain had deadened the sound of the horses, and thanked Providence. At last the Major satisfied himself (*a*) that he had left no one behind among the cairns, and (*b*) that he was not being taken in the rear by a large and powerful body of cavalry. The men's tempers were thoroughly spoiled, the horses were lathered and unquiet, and one and all prayed for the daylight.

They set themselves to climb up the hill, each man leading his mount carefully. Before they had covered the lower slopes or the breast-plates had begun to tighten, a thunderstorm came up behind, rolling across the low hills and drowning any noise less than that of cannon. The first flash of the lightning showed the bare ribs of the ascent, the hill-crest standing steely-blue against the black sky, the little falling lines of the rain, and, a few yards to their left flank, an Afghan watch-tower, two-storied, built of stone, and entered by a ladder from



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the upper story. The ladder was up, and a man with a rifle was leaning from the window. The darkness and the thunder rolled down in an instant, and, when the lull followed, a voice from the watch-tower cried, "Who goes there?"

The cavalry were very quiet, but each man gripped his carbine and stood beside his horse. Again the voice called, "Who goes there?" and in a louder key, "O brothers, give the alarm!" Now, every man in the cavalry would have died in his long boots sooner than have asked for quarter, but it is a fact that the answer to the second call was a long wail of "Marf karo! Marf karo!" which means, "Have mercy! Have mercy!" It came from the climbing regiment.

The cavalry stood dumbfounded, till the big troopers had time to whisper one to another: "Mir Khan, was that thy voice? Abdullah, didst *thou* call?" Lieutenant Halley stood beside his charger and waited. So long as no firing was going on he was content. Another flash of lightning showed the horses with heaving flanks and nodding heads; the men, white eye-balled, glaring beside them, and the stone watch-tower to the left. This time there was no head at the window, and the rude iron-clamped shutter that could turn a rifle-bullet was closed.

"Go on, men," said the Major. "Get up to the top at any rate!" The squadron toiled for-



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ward, the horses wagging their tails and the men pulling at the bridles, the stones rolling down the hillside and the sparks flying. Lieutenant Halley declares that he never heard a squadron make so much noise in his life. They scrambled up, he said, as though each horse had eight legs and a spare horse to follow him. Even then there was no sound from the watch-tower, and the men stopped exhausted on the ridge that overlooked the pit of darkness in which the village of Bersund lay. Girths were loosed, curb-chains shifted, and saddles adjusted, and the men dropped down among the stones. Whatever might happen now, they held the upper ground of any attack.

The thunder ceased, and with it the rain, and the soft thick darkness of a winter night before the dawn covered them all. Except for the sound of falling water among the ravines below, everything was still. They heard the shutter of the watch-tower below them thrown back with a clang, and the voice of the watcher calling, "Oh, Hafiz Ullah!"

The echoes took up the call, "La-la-la!" and an answer came from the watch-tower hidden round the curve of the hill, "What is it, Shahbaz Khan?"

Shahbaz Khan replied in the high-pitched voice of the mountaineer: "Hast thou seen?"

The answer came back: "Yes. God deliver us from all evil spirits!"

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There was a pause, and then: "Hafiz Ullah, I am alone! Come to me."

"Shahbaz Khan, I am alone also; but I dare not leave my post!"

"That is a lie; thou art afraid."

A longer pause followed, and then: "I am afraid. Be silent! They are below us still. Pray to God and sleep."

The troopers listened and wondered, for they could not understand what save earth and stone could lie below the watch-towers.

Shahbaz Khan began to call again: "They are below us. I can see them! For the pity of God come over to me, Hafiz Ullah! My father slew ten of them. Come over!"

Hafiz Ullah answered in a very loud voice, "Mine was guiltless. Hear, ye Men of the Night, neither my father nor my blood had any part in that sin. Bear thou thine own punishment, Shahbaz Khan."

"Oh, some one ought to stop those two chaps crowing away like cocks there," said the Lieutenant, shivering under his rock.

He had hardly turned round to expose a new side of him to the rain before a bearded, long-locked, evil-smelling Afghan rushed up the hill, and tumbled into his arms. Halley sat upon him, and thrust as much of a sword-hilt as could be spared down the man's gullet. "If you cry out, I kill you," he said cheerfully.

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The man was beyond any expression of terror. He lay and quaked, gasping. When Halley took the sword-hilt from between his teeth, he was still inarticulate, but clung to Halley's arm, feeling it from elbow to wrist.

"The Rissala! The dead Rissala!" he gasped, "It is down there!"

"No; the Rissala, the very much alive Rissala. It is up here," said Halley, unshipping his watering-bridle and fastening the man's hands. "Why were you in the towers so foolish as to let us pass?"

"The valley is full of the dead," said the Afghan. "It is better to fall into the hands of the English than the hands of the dead. They march to and fro below there. I saw them in the lightning."

He recovered his composure after a little, and whispering, because Halley's pistol was at his stomach, said: "What is this? There is no war between us now, and the Mullah will kill me for not seeing you pass!"

"Rest easy," said Halley; "we are coming to kill the Mullah, if God please. His teeth have grown too long. No harm will come to thee unless the daylight shows thee as a face which is desired by the gallows for crime done. But what of the dead regiment?"

"I only kill within my own border," said the man, immensely relieved. "The dead regiment is below. The men must have passed through it

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on their journey—four hundred dead on horses, stumbling among their own graves, among the little heaps—dead men all, whom we slew.”

“Whew!” said Halley. “That accounts for my cursing Carter and the Major cursing me. Four hundred sabres, eh? No wonder we thought there were a few extra men in the troop. Kurruk Shah,” he whispered to a grizzled native officer that lay within a few feet of him, “hast thou heard anything of a dead Rissala in these hills?”

“Assuredly,” said Kurruk Shah with a grin and chuckle. “Otherwise, why did I, who have served the Queen for seven-and-twenty years, and killed many hill-dogs, shout aloud for quarter when the lightning revealed us to the watch-towers? When I was a young man I saw the killing in the valley of Sheor-Kôt there at our feet, and I know the tale that grew up therefrom. But how can the ghosts of unbelievers prevail against us who are of the Faith? Strap that dog’s hands a little tighter, Sahib. An Afghan is like an eel.”

“But a dead Rissala,” said Halley, jerking his captive’s wrist. “That is foolish talk, Kurruk Shah. The dead are dead. Hold still, *Sag!*” The Afghan wriggled.

“The dead are dead, and for that reason they walk at night. What need to talk? We be men; we have our eyes and ears. Thou canst both see

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and hear them down the hillside," said Kurruk Shah composedly.

Halley stared and listened long and intently. The valley was full of stifled noises, as every valley must be at night; but whether he saw or heard more than was natural Halley alone knows, and he does not choose to speak on the subject.

At last, and just before the dawn, a green rocket shot up from the far side of the valley of Bersund, at the head of the gorge, to show that the Goorkhas were in position. A red light from the infantry at left and right answered it, and the cavalry burnt a white flare. Afghans in winter are late sleepers, and it was not till full day that the Gulla Kutta Mullah's men began to straggle from their huts, rubbing their eyes. They saw men in green, and red, and brown uniforms, leaning on their arms, neatly arranged all round the crater of the village of Bersund, in a cordon that not even a wolf could have broken. They rubbed their eyes the more when a pink-faced young man, who was not even in the Army, but represented the Political Department, tripped down the hillside with two orderlies, rapped at the door of the Gulla Kutta Mullah's house, and told him quietly to step out and be tied up for safe transport. That same young man passed on through the huts, tapping here one cateran and there another lightly with his cane; and as each was pointed out, so he was

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tied up, staring hopelessly at the crowned heights around where the English soldiers looked down with incurious eyes. Only the Mullah tried to carry it off with curses and high words, till a soldier who was tying his hands said:—

“None o’ your lip! Why didn’t you come out when you was ordered, instead o’ keeping us awake all night? You’re no better than my own barrack-sweeper, you white-headed old polyanthus! Kim up!”

Half an hour later the troops had gone away with the Mullah and his thirteen friends. The dazed villagers were looking ruefully at a pile of broken muskets and snapped swords, and wondering how in the world they had come so to miscalculate the forbearance of the Indian Government.

It was a very neat little affair, neatly carried out, and the men concerned were unofficially thanked for their services.

Yet it seems to me that much credit is also due to another regiment whose name did not appear in brigade orders, and whose very existence is in danger of being forgotten.

## THE DRUMS OF THE FORE AND AFT

IN the Army List they still stand as "The Fore and Fit Princess Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen-Anspach's Merther-Tydfilshire Own Royal Loyal Light Infantry, Regimental District 329A," but the Army through all its barracks and canteens knows them now as the "Fore and Aft." They may in time do something that shall make their new title honourable, but at present they are bitterly ashamed, and the man who calls them "Fore and Aft" does so at the risk of the head which is on his shoulders.

Two words breathed into the stables of a certain Cavalry Regiment will bring the men out into the streets with belts and mops and bad language ; but a whisper of "Fore and Aft" will bring out this regiment with rifles.

Their one excuse is that they came again and did their best to finish the job in style. But for a time all their world knows that they were openly beaten, whipped, dumb-cowed, shaking and afraid. The men know it; their officers know it; the Horse Guards know it, and when the next war comes the enemy will know it also. There are two or three regiments of the Line that have a



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black mark against their names which they will then wipe out; and it will be excessively inconvenient for the troops upon whom they do their wiping.

The courage of the British soldier is officially supposed to be above proof, and, as a general rule, it is so. The exceptions are decently shovelled out of sight, only to be referred to in the freshest of unguarded talk that occasionally swamps a Mess-table at midnight. Then one hears strange and horrible stories of men not following their officers, of orders being given by those who had no right to give them, and of disgrace that, but for the standing luck of the British Army, might have ended in brilliant disaster. These are unpleasant stories to listen to, and the Messes tell them under their breath, sitting by the big wood fires, and the young officer bows his head and thinks to himself, please God, his men shall never behave unhandily.

The British soldier is not altogether to be blamed for occasional lapses; but this verdict he should not know. A moderately intelligent General will waste six months in mastering the craft of the particular war that he may be waging; a Colonel may utterly misunderstand the capacity of his regiment for three months after it has taken the field, and even a Company Commander may err and be deceived as to the temper and temperament of his own handful: wherefore the soldier, and the sol-

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dier of to-day more particularly, should not be blamed for falling back. He should be shot or hanged afterwards — to encourage the others; but he should not be vilified in newspapers, for that is want of tact and waste of space.

He has, let us say, been in the service of the Empress for, perhaps, four years. He will leave in another two years. He has no inherited morals, and four years are not sufficient to drive toughness into his fibre, or to teach him how holy a thing is his Regiment. He wants to drink, he wants to enjoy himself — in India he wants to save money — and he does not in the least like getting hurt. He has received just sufficient education to make him understand half the purport of the orders he receives, and to speculate on the nature of clean, incised, and shattering wounds. Thus, if he is told to deploy under fire preparatory to an attack, he knows that he runs a very great risk of being killed while he is deploying, and suspects that he is being thrown away to gain ten minutes' time. He may either deploy with desperate swiftness, or he may shuffle, or bunch, or break, according to the discipline under which he has lain for four years.

Armed with imperfect knowledge, cursed with the rudiments of an imagination, hampered by the intense selfishness of the lower classes, and unsupported by any regimental associations, this young man is suddenly introduced to an enemy

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who in eastern lands is always ugly, generally tall and hairy, and frequently noisy. If he looks to the right and the left and sees old soldiers — men of twelve years' service, who, he knows, know what they are about — taking a charge, rush, or demonstration without embarrassment, he is consoled and applies his shoulder to the butt of his rifle with a stout heart. His peace is the greater if he hears a senior, who has taught him his soldiering and broken his head on occasion, whispering: "They'll shout and carry on like this for five minutes. Then they'll rush in, and then we've got 'em by the short hairs!"

But, on the other hand, if he sees only men of his own term of service, turning white and playing with their triggers and saying: "What the Hell's up now?" while the Company Commanders are sweating into their sword-hilts and shouting: "Front rank, fix bayonets. Steady there — steady! Sight for three hundred — no, for five! Lie down, all! Steady! Front rank kneel!" and so forth, he becomes unhappy, and grows acutely miserable when he hears a comrade turn over with the rattle of fire-irons falling into the fender, and the grunt of a pole-axed ox. If he can be moved about a little and allowed to watch the effect of his own fire on the enemy he feels merrier, and may be then worked up to the blind passion of fighting, which is, contrary to general belief, con-

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trolled by a chilly Devil and shakes men like ague. If he is not moved about, and begins to feel cold at the pit of the stomach, and in that crisis is badly mauled and hears orders that were never given, he will break, and he will break badly, and of all things under the light of the Sun there is nothing more terrible than a broken British regiment. When the worst comes to the worst and the panic is really epidemic, the men must be c'en let go, and the Company Commanders had better escape to the enemy and stay there for safety's sake. If they can be made to come again they are not pleasant men to meet; because they will not break twice.

About thirty years from this date, when we have succeeded in half-educating everything that wears trousers, our Army will be a beautifully unreliable machine. It will know too much and it will do too little. Later still, when all men are at the mental level of the officer of to-day, it will sweep the earth. Speaking roughly, you must employ either blackguards or gentlemen, or, best of all, blackguards commanded by gentlemen, to do butcher's work with efficiency and despatch. The ideal soldier should, of course, think for himself—the "Pocket-book" says so. Unfortunately, to attain this virtue, he has to pass through the phase of thinking of himself, and that is misdirected genius. A blackguard may be slow to think

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for himself, but he is genuinely anxious to kill, and a little punishment teaches him how to guard his own skin and perforate another's. A powerfully prayerful Highland Regiment, officered by rank Presbyterians, is, perhaps, one degree more terrible in action than a hard-bitten thousand of irresponsible Irish ruffians led by most improper young unbelievers. But these things prove the rule — which is that the midway men are not to be trusted alone. They have ideas about the value of life and an upbringing that has not taught them to go on and take the chances. They are carefully unprovided with a backing of comrades who have been shot over, and until that backing is re-introduced, as a great many Regimental Commanders intend it shall be, they are more liable to disgrace themselves than the size of the Empire or the dignity of the Army allows. Their officers are as good as good can be, because their training begins early, and God has arranged that a clean-run youth of the British middle classes shall, in the matter of backbone, brains, and bowels, surpass all other youths. For this reason a child of eighteen will stand up, doing nothing, with a tin sword in his hand and joy in his heart until he is dropped. If he dies, he dies like a gentleman. If he lives, he writes Home that he has been “potted,” “sniped,” “chipped,” or “cut over,” and sits down to besiege Government for

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a wound-gratuity until the next little war breaks out, when he perjures himself before a Medical Board, blarneys his Colonel, burns incense round his Adjutant, and is allowed to go to the Front once more.

Which homily brings me directly to a brace of the most finished little fiends that ever banged drum or tootled fife in the Band of a British Regiment. They ended their sinful career by open and flagrant mutiny and were shot for it. Their names were Jakin and Lew — Piggy Lew — and they were bold, bad drummer-boys, both of them frequently birched by the Drum-Major of the Fore and Aft.

Jakin was a stunted child of fourteen, and Lew was about the same age. When not looked after, they smoked and drank. They swore habitually after the manner of the Barrack-room, which is cold swearing and comes from between clenched teeth, and they fought religiously once a week. Jakin had sprung from some London gutter, and may or may not have passed through Dr. Barnardo's hands ere he arrived at the dignity of drummer-boy. Lew could remember nothing except the Regiment and the delight of listening to the Band from his earliest years. He hid somewhere in his grimy little soul a genuine love for music, and was most mistakenly furnished with the head of a cherub: insomuch that beautiful ladies who



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watched the Regiment in church were wont to speak of him as a "darling." They never heard his vitriolic comments on their manners and morals, as he walked back to barracks with the Band and matured fresh causes of offence against Jakin.

The other drummer-boys hated both lads on account of their illogical conduct. Jakin might be pounding Lew, or Lew might be rubbing Jakin's head in the dirt, but any attempt at aggression on the part of an outsider was met by the combined forces of Lew and Jakin; and the consequences were painful. The boys were the Ishmaels of the corps, but wealthy Ishmaels, for they sold battles in alternate weeks for the sport of the barracks when they were not pitted against other boys; and thus amassed money.

On this particular day there was dissension in the camp. They had just been convicted afresh of smoking, which is bad for little boys who use plug-tobacco, and Lew's contention was that Jakin had "stunk so 'orrid bad from keepin' the pipe in pocket," that he and he alone was responsible for the birching they were both tingling under.

"I tell you I 'id the pipe back o' barracks," said Jakin pacifically.

"You're a bloomin' liar," said Lew without heat.

"You're a bloomin' little barstard," said Jakin.



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strong in the knowledge that his own ancestry was unknown.

Now there is one word in the extended vocabulary of barrack-room abuse that cannot pass without comment. You may call a man a thief and risk nothing. You may even call him a coward without finding more than a boot whiz past your ear, but you must not call a man a bastard unless you are prepared to prove it on his front teeth.

"You might ha' kep' that till I wasn't so sore," said Lew sorrowfully, dodging round Jakin's guard.

"I'll make you sorer," said Jakin genially, and got home on Lew's alabaster forehead. All would have gone well and this story, as the books say, would never have been written, had not his evil fate prompted the Bazar-Sergeant's son, a long, employless man of five-and-twenty, to put in an appearance after the first round. He was eternally in need of money, and knew that the boys had silver.

"Fighting again," said he. "I'll report you to my father, and he'll report you to the Colour-Sergeant."

"What's that to you?" said Jakin with an unpleasant dilation of the nostrils.

"Oh! nothing to *me*. You'll get into trouble, and you've been up too often to afford that."

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“What the Hell do you know about what we’ve done?” asked Lew the Seraph. “*You* aren’t in the Army, you lousy, cadging civilian.”

He closed in on the man’s left flank.

“Jes’ ’cause you find two gentlemen settlin’ their diff’rences with their fistes you stick in your ugly nose where you aren’t wanted. Run ’ome to your ’arf-caste slut of a Ma — or we’ll give you what-for,” said Jakin.

The man attempted reprisals by knocking the boys’ heads together. The scheme would have succeeded had not Jakin punched him vehemently in the stomach, or had Lew refrained from kicking his shins. They fought together, bleeding and breathless, for half an hour, and, after heavy punishment, triumphantly pulled down their opponent as terriers pull down a jackal.

“Now,” gasped Jakin, “I’ll give you what-for.” He proceeded to pound the man’s features while Lew stamped on the outlying portions of his anatomy. Chivalry is not a strong point in the composition of the average drummer-boy. He fights, as do his betters, to make his mark.

Ghastly was the ruin that escaped, and awful was the wrath of the Bazar-Sergeant. Awful too was the scene in Orderly-room when the two reprobates appeared to answer the charge of half-murdering a “civilian.” The Bazar-Sergeant thirsted for a criminal action, and his son lied. The boys stood

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to attention while the black clouds of evidence accumulated.

"You little devils are more trouble than the rest of the Regiment put together," said the Colonel angrily. "One might as well admonish thistledown, and I can't well put you in cells or under stoppages. You must be birched again."

"Beg y' pardon, Sir. Can't we say nothin' in our own defence, Sir?" shrilled Jakin.

"Hey! What? Are you going to argue with *me*?" said the Colonel.

"No, Sir," said Lew. "But if a man come to you, Sir, and said he was going to report you, Sir, for 'aving a bit of a turn-up with a friend, Sir, an' wanted to get money out o' *you*, Sir ——"

The Orderly-room exploded in a roar of laughter. "Well?" said the Colonel.

"That was what that measly *jarnwar* there did, Sir, and 'e'd 'a' *done* it, Sir, if we 'adn't prevented 'im. We didn't 'it 'im much, Sir. 'E 'adn't no manner o' right to interfere with us, Sir. I don't mind bein' birched by the Drum-Major, Sir, nor yet reported by *any* Corp'ral, but I'm—but I don't think it's fair, Sir, for a civilian to come an' talk over a man in the Army."

A second shout of laughter shook the Orderly-room, but the Colonel was grave.

"What sort of characters have these boys?" he asked of the Regimental Sergeant-Major.

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“Accordin’ to the Bandmaster, Sir,” returned that revered official — the only soul in the Regiment whom the boys feared — “they do everything *but* lie, Sir.”

“Is it like we’d go for that man for fun, Sir?” said Lew, pointing to the plaintiff.

“Oh, admonished — admonished!” said the Colonel testily, and when the boys had gone he read the Bazar-Sergeant’s son a lecture on the sin of unprofitable meddling, and gave orders that the Bandmaster should keep the Drums in better discipline.

“If either of you come to practice again with so much as a scratch on your two ugly little faces,” thundered the Bandmaster, “I’ll tell the Drum-Major to take the skin off your backs. Understand that, you young devils.”

Then he repented of his speech for just the length of time that Lew, looking like a seraph in red worsted embellishments, took the place of one of the trumpets — in hospital — and rendered the echo of a battle-piece. Lew certainly was a musician, and had often in his more exalted moments expressed a yearning to master every instrument of the Band.

“There’s nothing to prevent your becoming a Bandmaster, Lew,” said the Bandmaster, who had composed waltzes of his own, and worked day and night in the interests of the Band.

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“What did he say?” demanded Jakin after practice.

“Said I might be a bloomin’ Bandmaster, an’ be asked in to ’ave a glass o’ sherry wine on Mess-nights.”

“Ho! ’Said you might be a bloomin’ non-combatant, did ’e! That’s just about wot ’e would say. When I’ve put in my boy’s service — it’s a bloomin’ shame that doesn’t count for pension — I’ll take on as a privit. Then I’ll be a Lance in a year—knowin’ what I know about the ins an’ outs o’ things. In three years I’ll be a bloomin’ Sergeant. I won’t marry then, not I! I’ll ’old on and learn the orf’cers’ ways an’ apply for exchange into a reg’ment that doesn’t know all about me. Then I’ll be a bloomin’ orf’cer. Then I’ll ask you to ’ave a glass o’ sherry wine, *Mister* Lew, an’ you’ll bloomin’ well ’ave to stay in the hanty-room while the Mess-Sergeant brings it to your dirty ’ands.”

“’S’pose I’m going to be a Bandmaster? Not I, quite. I’ll be a orf’cer too. There’s nothin’ like takin’ to a thing an’ stickin’ to it, the Schoolmaster says. The Reg’ment don’t go ’ome for another seven years. I’ll be a Lance then or near to.”

Thus the boys discussed their futures, and conducted themselves piously for a week. That is to say, Lew started a flirtation with the Colour-Sergeant’s daughter, aged thirteen — “not,” as he

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explained to Jakin, "with any intention o' matrimony, but by way o' keepin' my 'and in." And the black-haired Cris Delighan enjoyed that flirtation more than previous ones, and the other drummer-boys raged furiously together, and Jakin preached sermons on the dangers of "bein' tangled along o' petticoats."

But neither love nor virtue would have held Lew long in the paths of propriety had not the rumour gone abroad that the Regiment was to be sent on active service, to take part in a war which, for the sake of brevity, we will call "The War of the Lost Tribes."

The barracks had the rumour almost before the Mess-room, and of all the nine hundred men in barracks, not ten had seen a shot fired in anger. The Colonel had, twenty years ago, assisted at a Frontier expedition; one of the Majors had seen service at the Cape; a confirmed deserter in E Company had helped to clear streets in Ireland; but that was all. The Regiment had been put by for many years. The overwhelming mass of its rank and file had from three to four years' service; the non-commissioned officers were under thirty years old; and men and sergeants alike had forgotten to speak of the stories written in brief upon the Colours—the New Colours that had been formally blessed by an Archbishop in England ere the Regiment came away.



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They wanted to go to the Front—they were enthusiastically anxious to go—but they had no knowledge of what war meant, and there was none to tell them. They were an educated regiment, the percentage of school-certificates in their ranks was high, and most of the men could do more than read and write. They had been recruited in loyal observance of the territorial idea; but they themselves had no notion of that idea. They were made up of drafts from an over-populated manufacturing district. The system had put flesh and muscle upon their small bones, but it could not put heart into the sons of those who for generations had done overmuch work for overscanty pay, had sweated in drying-rooms, stooped over looms, coughed among white-lead, and shivered on lime-barges. The men had found food and rest in the Army, and now they were going to fight “niggers”—people who ran away if you shook a stick at them. Wherefore they cheered lustily when the rumour ran, and the shrewd, clerkly non-commissioned officers speculated on the chances of batta and of saving their pay. At Headquarters men said: “The Fore and Fit have never been under fire within the last generation. Let us, therefore, break them in easily by setting them to guard lines of communication.” And this would have been done but for the fact that British Regiments were wanted—badly wanted—at the Front, and



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there were doubtful Native Regiments that could fill the minor duties. "Brigade 'em with two strong Regiments," said Headquarters. "They may be knocked about a bit, but they'll learn their business before they come through. Nothing like a night-alarm and a little cutting-up of stragglers to make a Regiment smart in the field. Wait till they've had half a dozen sentries' throats cut."

The Colonel wrote with delight that the temper of his men was excellent, that the Regiment was all that could be wished, and as sound as a bell. The Majors smiled with a sober joy, and the sub-alterns waltzed in pairs down the Mess-room after dinner, and nearly shot themselves at revolver-practice. But there was consternation in the hearts of Jakin and Lew. What was to be done with the Drums? Would the Band go to the Front? How many of the Drums would accompany the Regiment?

They took counsel together, sitting in a tree and smoking.

"It's more than a bloomin' toss-up they'll leave us be'ind at the Depôt with the women. You'll like that," said Jakin sarcastically.

"'Cause o' Cris, y' mean? Wot's a woman, or a 'ole bloomin' depôt o' women, 'longside o' the chanst of field-service? You know I'm as keen on goin' as you," said Lew.

"'Wish I was a bloomin' bugler," said Jakin

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sadly. "They'll take Tom Kidd along, that I can plaster a wall with, an' like as not they won't take us."

"Then let's go an' make Tom Kidd so bloomin' sick 'e can't bugle no more. You 'old 'is 'ands an' I'll kick him," said Lew, wriggling on the branch.

"That ain't no good neither. We ain't the sort o' characters to presoom on our rep'tations—they're bad. If they have the Band at the Depôt we don't go, and no error *there*. If they take the Band we may get cast for medical unfitness. Are you medical fit, Piggy?" said Jakin, digging Lew in the ribs with force.

"Yus," said Lew with an oath. "The Doctor says your 'eart's weak through smokin' on an empty stummick. Throw a chest an' I'll try yer."

Jakin threw out his chest, which Lew smote with all his might. Jakin turned very pale, gasped, crowed, screwed up his eyes, and said—"That's all right."

"You'll do," said Lew. "I've 'eard o' men dying when you 'it 'em fair on the breastbone."

"Don't bring us no nearer goin', though," said Jakin. "Do you know where we're ordered?"

"Gawd knows, an' 'E won't split on a pal. Somewheres up to the Front to kill Paythans—hairly big beggars that turn you inside out if they get 'old o' you. They say their women are good-looking, too."

"Any loot?" asked the abandoned Jakin.

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“Not a bloomin’ anna, they say, unless you dig up the ground an’ see what the niggers ’ave ’id. They’re a poor lot.” Jakin stood upright on the branch and gazed across the plain.

“Lew,” said he, “there’s the Colonel coming. ’Colonel’s a good old beggar. Let’s go an’ talk to ’im.”

Lew nearly fell out of the tree at the audacity of the suggestion. Like Jakin he feared not God, neither regarded he Man, but there are limits even to the audacity of a drummer-boy, and to speak to a Colonel was ——

But Jakin had slid down the trunk and doubled in the direction of the Colonel. That officer was walking wrapped in thought and visions of a C. B. — yes, even a K. C. B., for had he not at command one of the best Regiments of the Line — the Fore and Fit? And he was aware of two small boys charging down upon him. Once before it had been solemnly reported to him that “the Drums were in a state of mutiny,” Jakin and Lew being the ringleaders. This looked like an organised conspiracy.

The boys halted at twenty yards, walked to the regulation four paces, and saluted together, each as well set-up as a ramrod and little taller.

The Colonel was in a genial mood; the boys appeared very forlorn and unprotected on the desolate plain, and one of them was handsome.

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“Well!” said the Colonel, recognising them. “Are you going to pull me down in the open? I’m sure I never interfere with you, even though” — he sniffed suspiciously — “you have been smoking.”

It was time to strike while the iron was hot. Their hearts beat tumultuously.

“Beg y’ pardon, Sir,” began Jakin. “The Reg’ment’s ordered on active service, Sir?”

“So I believe,” said the Colonel courteously.

“Is the Band goin’, Sir?” said both together. Then, without pause, “We’re goin’, Sir, ain’t we?”

“You!” said the Colonel, stepping back the more fully to take in the two small figures. “You! You’d die in the first march.”

“No, we wouldn’t, Sir. We can march with the Reg’ment anywheres — p’rade an’ anywhere else,” said Jakin.

“If Tom Kidd goes ’e’ll shut up like a clasp-knife,” said Lew. “Tom ’as very-close veins in both ’is legs, Sir.”

“Very how much?”

“Very-close veins, Sir. That’s why they swells after long p’rade, Sir. If ’e can go, we can go, Sir.”

Again the Colonel looked at them long and intently.

“Yes, the Band is going,” he said as gravely as though he had been addressing a brother officer.

“Have you any parents, either of you two?”

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“No, Sir,” rejoicingly from Lew and Jakin. “We’re both orphans, Sir. There’s no one to be considered of on our account, Sir.”

“You poor little sprats, and you want to go up to the Front with the Regiment, do you? Why?”

“I’ve wore the Queen’s Uniform for two years,” said Jakin. “It’s very ’ard, Sir, that a man don’t get no recompense for doin’ of ’is dooty, Sir.”

“An’—an’ if I don’t go, Sir,” interrupted Lew, “the Bandmaster ’e says ’e’ll catch an’ make a bloo—a blessed musician o’ me, Sir. Before I’ve seen any service, Sir.”

The Colonel made no answer for a long time. Then he said quietly: “If you’re passed by the Doctor I dare say you can go. I shouldn’t smoke if I were you.”

The boys saluted and disappeared. The Colonel walked home and told the story to his wife, who nearly cried over it. The Colonel was well pleased. If that was the temper of the children, what would not the men do?

Jakin and Lew entered the boys’ barrack-room with great stateliness, and refused to hold any conversation with their comrades for at least ten minutes. Then, bursting with pride, Jakin drawled: “I’ve bin intervoo’in’ the Colonel. Good old beggar is the Colonel. Says I to ’im, ‘Colonel,’ says I, ‘let me go to the Front, along o’ the Reg’ment.’—‘To the Front you shall go,’ says ’e, ‘an’ I only

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wish there was more like you among the dirty little devils that bang the bloomin' drums.' Kidd, if you throw your 'courtremments at me for tellin' you the truth to your own advantage, your legs'll swell."

None the less there was a Battle-Royal in the barrack-room, for the boys were consumed with envy and hate, and neither Jakin nor Lew behaved in conciliatory wise.

"I'm goin' out to say adoo to my girl," said Lew, to cap the climax. "Don't none o' you touch my kit because it's wanted for active service; me bein' specially invited to go by the Colonel."

He strolled forth and whistled in the clump of trees at the back of the Married Quarters till Cris came to him, and, the preliminary kisses being given and taken, Lew began to explain the situation.

"I'm goin' to the Front with the Reg'ment," he said valiantly.

"Piggy, you're a little liar," said Cris, but her heart misgave her, for Lew was not in the habit of lying.

"Liar yourself, Cris," said Lew, slipping an arm round her. "I'm goin'. When the Reg'ment marches out you'll see me with 'em, all galliant and gay. Give us another kiss, Cris, on the strength of it."

"If you'd on'y a-stayed at the Depôt — where

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you *ought* to ha' bin — you could get as many of 'em as — as you dam please," whimpered Cris, putting up her mouth.

"It's 'ard, Cris. I grant you it's 'ard. But what's a man to do? If I'd a-stayed at the Depôt, you wouldn't think anything of me."

"Like as not, but I'd 'ave you with me, Piggy. An' all the thinkin' in the world isn't like kissin'."

"An' all the kissin' in the world isn't like 'avin' a medal to wear on the front o' your coat."

"*You* won't get no medal."

"Oh, yus, I shall though. Me an' Jakin are the only acting-drummers that'll be took along. All the rest is full men, an' we'll get our medals with them."

"They might ha' taken anybody but you, Piggy. You'll get killed — you're so venture-some. Stay with me, Piggy darlin', down at the Depôt, an' I'll love you true, for ever."

"Ain't you goin' to do that *now*, Cris? You said you was."

"O' course I am, but th' other's more comfortable. Wait till you've growed a bit, Piggy. You aren't no taller than me now."

"I've bin in the Army for two years, an' I'm not goin' to get out of a chanst o' seein' service, an' don't you try to make me do so. I'll come back, Cris, an' when I take on as a man I'll marry you — marry you when I'm a Lance."



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“Promise, Piggy.”

Lew reflected on the future as arranged by Jakin a short time previously, but Cris’s mouth was very near to his own.

“I promise, s’elp me Gawd!” said he.

Cris slid an arm round his neck.

“I won’t ’old you back no more, Piggy. Go away an’ get your medal, an’ I’ll make you a new button-bag as nice as I know how,” she whispered.

“Put some o’ your ’air into it, Cris, an’ I’ll keep it in my pocket so long’s I’m alive.”

Then Cris wept anew, and the interview ended. Public feeling among the drummer-boys rose to fever pitch, and the lives of Jakin and Lew became unenviable. Not only had they been permitted to enlist two years before the regulation boy’s age — fourteen — but, by virtue, it seemed, of their extreme youth, they were allowed to go to the Front — which thing had not happened to acting-drummers within the knowledge of boy. The Band which was to accompany the Regiment had been cut down to the regulation twenty men, the surplus returning to the ranks. Jakin and Lew were attached to the Band as supernumeraries, though they would much have preferred being company buglers.

“’Don’t matter much,” said Jakin after the medical inspection. “Be thankful that we’re ’lowed to go at all. The Doctor ’e said that if

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we could stand what we took from the Bazar-Sergeant's son we'd stand pretty nigh anything."

"Which we will," said Lew, looking tenderly at the ragged and ill-made housewife that Cris had given him, with a lock of her hair worked into a sprawling "L" upon the cover.

"It was the best I could," she sobbed. "I wouldn't let mother nor the Sergeant's tailor 'elp me. Keep it always, Piggy, an' remember I love you true."

They marched to the railway station, nine hundred and sixty strong, and every soul in cantonments turned out to see them go. The drummers gnashed their teeth at Jakin and Lew marching with the Band, the married women wept upon the platform, and the Regiment cheered its noble self black in the face.

"A nice level lot," said the Colonel to the Second-in-Command as they watched the first four companies entraining.

"Fit to do anything," said the Second-in-Command enthusiastically. "But it seems to me they're a thought too young and tender for the work in hand. It's bitter cold up at the Front now."

"They're sound enough," said the Colonel. "We must take our chance of sick casualties."

So they went northward, ever northward, past droves and droves of camels, armies of camp-

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followers, and legions of laden mules, the throng thickening day by day, till with a shriek the train pulled up at a hopelessly congested junction where six lines of temporary track accommodated six forty-waggon trains; where whistles blew, Babus sweated, and Commissariat officers swore from dawn till far into the night, amid the wind-driven chaff of the fodder-bales and the lowing of a thousand steers.

“Hurry up—you’re badly wanted at the Front,” was the message that greeted the Fore and Aft, and the occupants of the Red Cross carriages told the same tale.

“’Tisn’t so much the bloomin’ fightin’,” gasped a headbound trooper of Hussars to a knot of admiring Fore and Afts. “’Tisn’t so much the bloomin’ fightin’, though there’s enough o’ that. It’s the bloomin’ food an’ the bloomin’ climate. Frost all night ’cept when it hails, and b’iling sun all day, and the water stinks fit to knock you down. I got my ’ead chipped like a egg; I’ve got pneumonia too, an’ my guts is all out o’ order. ’Tain’t no bloomin’ picnic in those parts, I can tell you.”

“Wot are the niggers like?” demanded a private.

“There’s some prisoners in that train yonder. Go an’ look at ’em. They’re the aristocracy o’ the country. The common folk are a dashed

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sight uglier. If you want to know what they fight with, reach under my seat an' pull out the long knife that's there."

They dragged out and beheld for the first time the grim, bone-handled, triangular Afghan knife. It was almost as long as Lew.

"That's the thing to j'int ye," said the trooper feebly. "It can take off a man's arm at the shoulder as easy as slicing butter. I halved the beggar that used that un, but there's more of his likes up above. They don't understand thrustin', but they're devils to slice."

The men strolled across the tracks to inspect the Afghan prisoners. They were unlike any "niggers" that the Fore and Aft had ever met—these huge, black-haired, scowling sons of the Beni-Israel. As the men stared the Afghans spat freely and muttered one to another with lowered eyes.

"My eyes! Wot awful swine!" said Jakin, who was in the rear of the procession. "Say, ole man, how you got *puckrowed*, eh? *Kiswasti* you wasn't hanged for your ugly face, hey?"

The tallest of the company turned, his leg-irons clanking at the movement, and stared at the boy. "See!" he cried to his fellows in Pushto. "They send children against us. What a people, and what fools!"

"*Hya!*" said Jakin, nodding his head cheerily.

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“You go down-country. *Kbana* get, *peenikapanee* get — live like a bloomin’ Raja *ke marfik*. That’s a better *bandobust* than baynit get it in your innards. Good-bye, ole man. Take care o’ your beautiful figure-’ead, an’ try to look *kushy*.”

The men laughed and fell in for their first march, when they began to realise that a soldier’s life is not all beer and skittles. They were much impressed with the size and bestial ferocity of the niggers whom they had now learned to call “Pay-thans,” and more with the exceeding discomfort of their own surroundings. Twenty old soldiers in the corps would have taught them how to make themselves moderately snug at night, but they had no old soldiers, and, as the troops on the line of march said, “they lived like pigs.” They learned the heart-breaking cussedness of camp-kitchens and camels and the depravity of an E. P. tent and a wither-wrung mule. They studied animalculæ in water, and developed a few cases of dysentery in their study.

At the end of their third march they were disagreeably surprised by the arrival in their camp of a hammered iron slug which, fired from a steady rest at seven hundred yards, flicked out the brains of a private seated by the fire. This robbed them of their peace for a night, and was the beginning of a long-range fire carefully calculated to that end. In the daytime they saw nothing except an un-

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pleasant puff of smoke from a crag above the line of march. At night there were distant spurts of flame and occasional casualties, which set the whole camp blazing into the gloom and, occasionally, into opposite tents. Then they swore vehemently and vowed that this was magnificent but not war.

Indeed it was not. The Regiment could not halt for reprisals against the sharpshooters of the country-side. Its duty was to go forward and make connection with the Scotch and Goorkha troops with which it was brigaded. The Afghans knew this, and knew too, after their first tentative shots, that they were dealing with a raw regiment. Thereafter they devoted themselves to the task of keeping the Fore and Aft on the strain. Not for anything would they have taken equal liberties with a seasoned corps — with the wicked little Goorkhas, whose delight it was to lie out in the open on a dark night and stalk their stalkers — with the terrible big men dressed in women's clothes, who could be heard praying to their God in the night-watches, and whose peace of mind no amount of "sniping" could shake — or with those vile Sikhs, who marched so ostentatiously unprepared and who dealt out such grim reward to those who tried to profit by that unpreparedness. This white regiment was different — quite different. It slept like a hog, and, like a hog, charged in every direction when it was roused. Its sentries walked



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with a footfall that could be heard for a quarter of a mile; would fire at anything that moved — even a driven donkey — and when they had once fired, could be scientifically “rushed” and laid out a horror and an offence against the morning sun. Then there were camp-followers who straggled and could be cut up without fear. Their shrieks would disturb the white boys, and the loss of their services would inconvenience them sorely.

Thus, at every march, the hidden enemy became bolder and the Regiment writhed and twisted under attacks it could not avenge. The crowning triumph was a sudden night-rush ending in the cutting of many tent-ropes, the collapse of the sodden canvas, and a glorious knifing of the men who struggled and kicked below. It was a great deed, neatly carried out, and it shook the already shaken nerves of the Fore and Aft. All the courage that they had been required to exercise up to this point was the “two o’clock in the morning courage”; and, so far, they had only succeeded in shooting their comrades and losing their sleep.

Sullen, discontented, cold, savage, sick, with their uniforms dulled and unclean, the Fore and Aft joined their Brigade.

“I hear you had a tough time of it coming up,” said the Brigadier. But when he saw the hospital-sheets his face fell.

“This is bad,” said he to himself. “They’re as



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rotten as sheep." And aloud to the Colonel—"I'm afraid we can't spare you just yet. We want all we have, else I should have given you ten days to recover in."

The Colonel winced. "On my honour, Sir," he returned, "there is not the least necessity to think of sparing us. My men have been rather mauled and upset without a fair return. They only want to go in somewhere where they can see what's before them."

"Can't say I think much of the Fore and Fit," said the Brigadier in confidence to his Brigade-Major. "They've lost all their soldiering, and, by the trim of them, might have marched through the country from the other side. A more fagged-out set of men I never put eyes on."

"Oh, they'll improve as the work goes on. The parade gloss has been rubbed off a little, but they'll put on field polish before long," said the Brigade-Major. "They've been mauled, and they don't quite understand it."

They did not. All the hitting was on one side, and it was cruelly hard hitting with accessories that made them sick. There was also the real sickness that laid hold of a strong man and dragged him howling to the grave. Worst of all, their officers knew just as little of the country as the men themselves, and looked as if they did. The Fore and Aft were in a thoroughly unsatisfactory

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condition, but they believed that all would be well if they could once get a fair go-in at the enemy. Pot-shots up and down the valleys were unsatisfactory, and the bayonet never seemed to get a chance. Perhaps it was as well, for a long-limbed Afghan with a knife had a reach of eight feet, and could carry away lead that would disable three Englishmen.

The Fore and Aft would like some rifle-practice at the enemy — all seven hundred rifles blazing together. That wish showed the mood of the men.

The Goorkhas walked into their camp, and in broken, barrack-room English strove to fraternise with them: offered them pipes of tobacco and stood them treat at the canteen. But the Fore and Aft, not knowing much of the nature of the Goorkhas, treated them as they would treat any other “niggers,” and the little men in green trotted back to their firm friends the Highlanders, and with many grins confided to them: “That dam white regiment no dam use. Sulky — ugh! Dirty — ugh! *Hya*, any tot for Johnny?” Whereat the Highlanders smote the Goorkhas as to the head, and told them not to vilify a British Regiment, and the Goorkhas grinned cavernously, for the Highlanders were their elder brothers and entitled to the privileges of kinship. The common soldier who touches a Goorkha is more than likely to have his head sliced open.

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Three days later the Brigadier arranged a battle according to the rules of war and the peculiarity of the Afghan temperament. The enemy were massing in inconvenient strength among the hills, and the moving of many green standards warned him that the tribes were "up" in aid of the Afghan regular troops. A squadron and a half of Bengal Lancers represented the available Cavalry, and two screw-guns, borrowed from a column thirty miles away, the Artillery at the General's disposal.

"If they stand, as I've a very strong notion that they will, I fancy we shall see an infantry fight that will be worth watching," said the Brigadier. "We'll do it in style. Each regiment shall be played into action by its Band, and we'll hold the Cavalry in reserve."

"For *all* the reserve?" somebody asked.

"For all the reserve; because we're going to crumple them up," said the Brigadier, who was an extraordinary Brigadier, and did not believe in the value of a reserve when dealing with Asiatics. Indeed, when you come to think of it, had the British Army consistently waited for reserves in all its little affairs, the boundaries of Our Empire would have stopped at Brighton beach.

The battle was to be a glorious battle.

The three regiments debouching from three separate gorges, after duly crowning the heights above, were to converge from the centre, left, and

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right upon what we will call the Afghan army, then stationed towards the lower extremity of a flat-bottomed valley. Thus it will be seen that three sides of the valley practically belonged to the English, while the fourth was strictly Afghan property. In the event of defeat the Afghans had the rocky hills to fly to, where the fire from the guerrilla tribes in aid would cover their retreat. In the event of victory these same tribes would rush down and lend their weight to the rout of the British.

The screw-guns were to shell the head of each Afghan rush that was made in close formation, and the Cavalry, held in reserve in the right valley, were to gently stimulate the break-up which would follow on the combined attack. The Brigadier, sitting upon a rock overlooking the valley, would watch the battle unrolled at his feet. The Fore and Aft would debouch from the central gorge, the Goorkhas from the left, and the Highlanders from the right, for the reason that the left flank of the enemy seemed as though it required the most hammering. It was not every day that an Afghan force would take ground in the open, and the Brigadier was resolved to make the most of it.

"If we only had a few more men," he said plaintively, "we could surround the creatures and crumple 'em up thoroughly. As it is, I'm

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afraid we can only cut them up as they run. It's a great pity."

The Fore and Aft had enjoyed unbroken peace for five days, and were beginning, in spite of dysentery, to recover their nerve. But they were not happy, for they did not know the work in hand, and had they known, would not have known how to do it. Throughout those five days in which old soldiers might have taught them the craft of the game, they discussed together their misadventures in the past — how such an one was alive at dawn and dead ere the dusk, and with what shrieks and struggles such another had given up his soul under the Afghan knife. Death was a new and horrible thing to the sons of mechanics who were used to die decently of zymotic disease; and their careful conservation in barracks had done nothing to make them look upon it with less dread.

Very early in the dawn the bugles began to blow, and the Fore and Aft, filled with a misguided enthusiasm, turned out without waiting for a cup of coffee and a biscuit; and were rewarded by being kept under arms in the cold while the other regiments leisurely prepared for the fray. All the world knows that it is ill taking the breeks off a Highlander. It is much iller to try to make him stir unless he is convinced of the necessity for haste.

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The Fore and Aft waited, leaning upon their rifles and listening to the protests of their empty stomachs. The Colonel did his best to remedy the default of lining as soon as it was borne in upon him that the affair would not begin at once, and so well did he succeed that the coffee was just ready when—the men moved off, their Band leading. Even then there had been a mistake in time, and the Fore and Aft came out into the valley ten minutes before the proper hour. Their Band wheeled to the right after reaching the open, and retired behind a little rocky knoll still playing while the Regiment went past.

It was not a pleasant sight that opened on the uninstructed view, for the lower end of the valley appeared to be filled by an army in position—real and actual regiments attired in red coats, and—of this there was no doubt—firing Martini-Henry bullets which cut up the ground a hundred yards in front of the leading company. Over that pock-marked ground the Regiment had to pass, and it opened the ball with a general and profound courtesy to the piping pickets; ducking in perfect time, as though it had been brazed on a rod. Being half capable of thinking for itself, it fired a volley by the simple process of pitching its rifle into its shoulder and pulling the trigger. The bullets may have accounted for some of the watchers on the hill side, but they certainly did not



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affect the mass of enemy in front, while the noise of the rifles drowned any orders that might have been given.

“Good God!” said the Brigadier, sitting on the rock high above all. “That Regiment has spoilt the whole show. Hurry up the others, and let the screw-guns get off.”

But the screw-guns, in working round the heights, had stumbled upon a wasp’s nest of a small mud fort which they incontinently shelled at eight hundred yards, to the huge discomfort of the occupants, who were unaccustomed to weapons of such devilish precision.

The Fore and Aft continued to go forward, but with shortened stride. Where were the other regiments, and why did these niggers use Martinis? They took open order instinctively, lying down and firing at random, rushing a few paces forward and lying down again, according to the regulations. Once in this formation, each man felt himself desperately alone, and edged in towards his fellow for comfort’s sake.

Then the crack of his neighbor’s rifle at his ear led him to fire as rapidly as he could — again for the sake of the comfort of the noise. The reward was not long delayed. Five volleys plunged the files in banked smoke impenetrable to the eye, and the bullets began to take ground twenty or thirty yards in front of the firers, as the weight of



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the bayonet dragged down and to the right arms wearied with holding the kick of the leaping Martini. The Company Commanders peered helplessly through the smoke, the more nervous mechanically trying to fan it away with their helmets.

“High and to the left!” bawled a Captain till he was hoarse. “No good! Cease firing, and let it drift away a bit.”

Three and four times the bugles shrieked the order, and when it was obeyed the Fore and Aft looked that their foe should be lying before them in mown swaths of men. A light wind drove the smoke to leeward, and showed the enemy still in position and apparently unaffected. A quarter of a ton of lead had been buried a furlong in front of them, as the ragged earth attested.

That was not demoralizing to the Afghans, who have not European nerves. They were waiting for the mad riot to die down, and were firing quietly into the heart of the smoke. A private of the Fore and Aft spun up his company shrieking with agony, another was kicking the earth and gasping, and a third, ripped through the lower intestines by a jagged bullet, was calling aloud on his comrades to put him out of his pain. These were the casualties, and they were not soothing to hear or see. The smoke cleared to a dull haze.

Then the foe began to shout with a great shout-

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ing, and a mass — a black mass — detached itself from the main body, and rolled over the ground at horrid speed. It was composed of, perhaps, three hundred men, who would shout and fire and slash if the rush of their fifty comrades who were determined to die carried home. The fifty were Ghazis, half maddened with drugs and wholly mad with religious fanaticism. When they rushed the British fire ceased, and in the lull the order was given to close ranks and meet them with the bayonet.

Any one who knew the business could have told the Fore and Aft that the only way of dealing with a Ghazi rush is by volleys at long ranges; because a man who means to die, who desires to die, who will gain heaven by dying, must, in nine cases out of ten, kill a man who has a lingering prejudice in favour of life. Where they should have closed and gone forward, the Fore and Aft opened out and skirmished, and where they should have opened out and fired, they closed and waited.

A man dragged from his blankets half awake and unfed is never in a pleasant frame of mind. Nor does his happiness increase when he watches the whites of the eyes of three hundred six-foot fiends upon whose beards the foam is lying, upon whose tongues is a roar of wrath, and in whose hands are yard-long knives.

The Fore and Aft heard the Goorkha bugles

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bringing that regiment forward at the double, while the neighing of the Highland pipes came from the left. They strove to stay where they were, though the bayonets wavered down the line like the oars of a ragged boat. Then they felt body to body the amazing physical strength of their foes; a shriek of pain ended the rush, and the knives fell amid scenes not to be told. The men clubbed together and smote blindly — as often as not at their own fellows. Their front crumpled like paper, and the fifty Ghazis passed on; their backers, now drunk with success, fighting as madly as they.

Then the rear ranks were bidden to close up, and the subalterns dashed into the stew—alone. For the rear-ranks had heard the clamour in front, the yells and the howls of pain, and had seen the dark stale blood that makes afraid. They were not going to stay. It was the rushing of the camps over again. Let their officers go to Hell, if they chose; they would get away from the knives.

“Come on!” shrieked the subalterns, and their men, cursing them, drew back, each closing in to his neighbour and wheeling round.

Charteris and Devlin, subalterns of the last company, faced their death alone in the belief that their men would follow.

“You’ve killed me, you cowards,” sobbed Devlin, and dropped, cut from the shoulder-strap to the

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centre of the chest; and a fresh detachment of his men retreating, always retreating, trampled him under foot as they made for the pass whence they had emerged.

I kissed her in the kitchen and I kissed her in the hall.

Child'un, child'un, follow me !

Oh Golly, said the cook, is he gwine to kiss us all ?

Halla — Halla — Halla — Hallelujah !

The Goorkhas were pouring through the left gorge and over the heights at the double to the invitation of their Regimental Quick-step. The black rocks were crowned with dark green spiders as the bugles gave tongue jubilantly :—

In the morning ! In the morning *by* the bright light !

When Gabriel blows his trumpet in the morning !

The Goorkha rear companies tripped and blundered over loose stones. The front files halted for a moment to take stock of the valley and to settle stray boot-laces. Then a happy little sigh of contentment soughed down the ranks, and it was as though the land smiled, for behold there below was the enemy, and it was to meet them that the Goorkhas had doubled so hastily. There was much enemy. There would be amusement. The little men hitched their *kukris* well to hand, and gaped expectantly at their officers as terriers grin ere the

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stone is cast for them to fetch. The Goorkhas' ground sloped downward to the valley, and they enjoyed a fair view of the proceedings. They sat upon the boulders to watch, for their officers were not going to waste their wind in assisting to repulse a Ghazi rush more than half a mile away. Let the white men look to their own front.

"Hi! yi!" said the Subadar-Major, who was sweating profusely. "Dam fools yonder, stand close order! This is no time for close order, it is the time for volleys. Ugh!"

Horrified, amused, and indignant, the Goorkhas beheld the retirement of the Fore and Aft with a running chorus of oaths and commentaries.

"They run! The white men run! Colonel Sahib, may *we* also do a little running?" murmured Runbir Thappa, the Senior Jemadar.

But the Colonel would have none of it. "Let the beggars be cut up a little," said he wrathfully. "Serves 'em right. They'll be prodded into facing round in a minute." He looked through his field-glasses, and caught the glint of an officer's sword.

"Beating 'em with the flat—damned conscripts! How the Ghazis are walking into them!" said he.

The Fore and Aft, heading back, bore with them their officers. The narrowness of the pass forced the mob into solid formation, and the rear ranks delivered some sort of a wavering volley. The

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Ghazis drew off, for they did not know what reserve the gorge might hide. Moreover, it was never wise to chase white men too far. They returned as wolves return to cover, satisfied with the slaughter that they had done, and only stopping to slash at the wounded on the ground. A quarter of a mile had the Fore and Aft retreated, and now, jammed in the pass, was quivering with pain, shaken and demoralised with fear, while the officers, maddened beyond control, smote the men with the hilts and the flats of their swords.

“Get back! Get back, you cowards—you women! Right about face—column of companies, form—you hounds!” shouted the Colonel, and the subalterns swore aloud. But the Regiment wanted to go—to go anywhere out of the range of those merciless knives. It swayed to and fro irresolutely with shouts and outcries, while from the right the Goorkhas dropped volley after volley of cripple-stopper Snider bullets at long range into the mob of the Ghazis returning to their own troops.

The Fore and Aft Band, though protected from direct fire by the rocky knoll under which it had sat down, fled at the first rush. Jakin and Lew would have fled also, but their short legs left them fifty yards in the rear, and by the time the Band had mixed with the Regiment, they were painfully aware that they would have to close in alone and unsupported.



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"Get back to that rock," gasped Jakin. "They won't see us there."

And they returned to the scattered instruments of the Band, their hearts nearly bursting their ribs.

"Here's a nice show for *us*," said Jakin, throwing himself full length on the ground. "A bloomin' fine show for British Infantry! Oh, the devils! They've gone and left us alone here! Wot'll we do?"

Lew took possession of a cast-off water-bottle, which naturally was full of canteen rum, and drank till he coughed again.

"Drink," said he shortly. "They'll come back in a minute or two — you see."

Jakin drank, but there was no sign of the Regiment's return. They could hear a dull clamour from the head of the valley of retreat, and saw the Ghazis slink back, quickening their pace as the Goorkhas fired at them.

"We're all that's left of the Band, an' we'll be cut up as sure as death," said Jakin.

"I'll die game, then," said Lew thickly, fumbling with his tiny drummer's sword. The drink was working on his brain as it was on Jakin's.

"'Old on! I know something better than fightin'," said Jakin, stung by the splendour of a sudden thought due chiefly to rum. "Tip our bloomin' cowards yonder the word to come back. The Paythan beggars are well away. Come on,



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Lew! We won't get hurt. Take the fife an' give me the drum. The Old Step for all your bloomin' guts are worth! There's a few of our men coming back now. Stand up, ye drunken little defaulter. By your right — quick march!"

He slipped the drum-sling over his shoulder, thrust the fife into Lew's hand, and the two boys marched out of the cover of the rock into the open, making a hideous hash of the first bars of the "British Grenadiers."

As Lew had said, a few of the Fore and Aft were coming back sullenly and shamefacedly under the stimulus of blows and abuse; their red coats shone at the head of the valley, and behind them were wavering bayonets. But between this shattered line and the enemy, who with Afghan suspicion feared that the hasty retreat meant an ambush, and had not moved therefore, lay half a mile of level ground dotted only by the wounded.

The tune settled into full swing and the boys kept shoulder to shoulder, Jakin banging the drum as one possessed. The one fife made a thin and pitiful squeaking, but the tune carried far, even to the Goorkhas.

"Come on, you dogs!" muttered Jakin to himself. "Are we to play forhever?" Lew was staring straight in front of him and marching more stiffly than ever he had done on parade.

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And in bitter mockery of the distant mob, the old tune of the Old Line shrilled and rattled:—

Some talk of Alexander,  
And some of Hercules ;  
Of Hector and Lysander,  
And such great names as these!

There was a far-off clapping of hands from the Goorkhas, and a roar from the Highlanders in the distance, but never a shot was fired by British or Afghan. The two little red dots moved forward in the open parallel to the enemy's front.

But of all the world's great heroes  
There's none that can compare,  
With a tow-row-row-row-row-row,  
To the British Grenadier!

The men of the Fore and Aft were gathering thick at the entrance into the plain. The Brigadier on the heights far above was speechless with rage. Still no movement from the enemy. The day stayed to watch the children.

Jakin halted and beat the long roll of the Assembly, while the fife squealed despairingly.

"Right about face! Hold up, Lew, you're drunk," said Jakin. They wheeled and marched back:—

Those heroes of antiquity  
Ne'er saw a cannon-ball,  
Nor knew the force o' powder,

## THE DRUMS OF THE FORE AND AFT

“Here they come!” said Jakin. “Go on, Lew”:—

To scare their foes withal!

The Fore and Aft were pouring out of the valley. What officers had said to men in that time of shame and humiliation will never be known; for neither officers nor men speak of it now.

“They are coming anew!” shouted a priest among the Afghans. “Do not kill the boys! Take them alive, and they shall be of our faith.”

But the first volley had been fired, and Lew dropped on his face. Jakin stood for a minute, spun round and collapsed, as the Fore and Aft came forward, the curses of their officers in their ears, and in their hearts the shame of open shame.

Half the men had seen the drummers die, and they made no sign. They did not even shout. They doubled out straight across the plain in open order, and they did not fire.

“This,” said the Colonel of Goorkhas, softly, “is the real attack, as it should have been delivered. Come on, my children.”

“Ulu-lu-lu-lu!” squealed the Goorkhas, and came down with a joyful clicking of *kukris*—those vicious Goorkha knives.

On the right there was no rush. The Highlanders, cannily commending their souls to God

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(for it matters as much to a dead man whether he has been shot in a Border scuffle or at Waterloo), opened out and fired according to their custom, that is to say without heat and without intervals, while the screw-guns, having disposed of the impertinent mud fort aforementioned, dropped shell after shell into the clusters round the flickering green standards on the heights.

“Charging is an unfortunate necessity,” murmured the Colour-Sergeant of the right company of the Highlanders. “It makes the men sweer so, but I am thinkin’ that it will come to a charge if these black devils stand much longer. Stewartt, man, you’re firing into the eye of the sun, and he’ll not take any harm for Government ammunection. A foot lower and a great deal slower! What are the English doing? They’re very quiet, there in the center. Running again?”

The English were not running. They were hacking and hewing and stabbing, for though one white man is seldom physically a match for an Afghan in a sheepskin or wadded coat, yet, through the pressure of many white men behind, and a certain thirst for revenge in his heart, he becomes capable of doing much with both ends of his rifle. The Fore and Aft held their fire till one bullet could drive through five or six men, and the front of the Afghan force gave on the volley. They then selected their men, and slew them with deep

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gasps and short hacking coughs, and groanings of leather belts against strained bodies, and realised for the first time that an Afghan attacked is far less formidable than an Afghan attacking; which fact old soldiers might have told them.

But they had no old soldiers in their ranks.

The Goorkhas' stall at the bazar was the noisiest, for the men were engaged—to a nasty noise as of beef being cut on the block—with the *kukri*, which they preferred to the bayonet; well knowing how the Afghan hates the half-moon blade.

As the Afghans wavered, the green standards on the mountain moved down to assist them in a last rally. This was unwise. The Lancers, chafing in the right gorge, had thrice despatched their only subaltern as galloper to report on the progress of affairs. On the third occasion he returned, with a bullet-graze on his knee, swearing strange oaths in Hindustani, and saying that all things were ready. So that squadron swung round the right of the Highlanders with a wicked whistling of wind in the pennons of its lances, and fell upon the remnant just when, according to all the rules of war, it should have waited for the foe to show more signs of wavering.

But it was a dainty charge, deftly delivered, and it ended by the Cavalry finding itself at the head of the pass by which the Afghans intended to retreat; and down the track that the lances had

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made streamed two companies of the Highlanders, which was never intended by the Brigadier. The new development was successful. It detached the enemy from his base as a sponge is torn from a rock, and left him ringed about with fire in that pitiless plain. And as a sponge is chased round the bath-tub by the hand of the bather, so were the Afghans chased till they broke into little detachments much more difficult to dispose of than large masses.

“See!” quoth the Brigadier. “Everything has come as I arranged. We’ve cut their base, and now we’ll bucket ’em to pieces.”

A direct hammering was all that the Brigadier had dared to hope for, considering the size of the force at his disposal; but men who stand or fall by the errors of their opponents may be forgiven for turning Chance into Design. The bucketing went forward merrily. The Afghan forces were upon the run—the run of wearied wolves who snarl and bite over their shoulders. The red lances dipped by twos and threes, and, with a shriek, uprose the lance-butt, like a spar on a stormy sea, as the trooper cantering forward cleared his point. The Lancers kept between their prey and the steep hills, for all who could were trying to escape from the valley of death. The Highlanders gave the fugitives two hundred yards’ law, and then brought them down, gasping and chok-



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ing ere they could reach the protection of the boulders above. The Goorkhas followed suit; but the Fore and Aft were killing on their own account, for they had penned a mass of men between their bayonets and a wall of rock, and the flash of the rifles was lighting the wadded coats.

"We cannot hold them, Captain Sahib!" panted a Ressaidar of Lancers. "Let us try the carbine. The lance is good, but it wastes time."

They tried the carbine, and still the enemy melted away—fled up the hills by hundreds when there were only twenty bullets to stop them. On the heights the screw-guns ceased firing—they had run out of ammunition—and the Brigadier groaned, for the musketry fire could not sufficiently smash the retreat. Long before the last volleys were fired, the doolies were out in force looking for the wounded. The battle was over, and, but for want of fresh troops, the Afghans would have been wiped off the earth. As it was, they counted their dead by hundreds, and nowhere were the dead thicker than in the track of the Fore and Aft.

But the Regiment did not cheer with the Highlanders, nor did they dance uncouth dances with the Goorkhas among the dead. They looked under their brows at the Colonel as they leaned upon their rifles and panted.

"Get back to camp, you. Haven't you dis-



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graced yourself enough for one day! Go and look to the wounded. It's all you're fit for," said the Colonel. Yet for the past hour the Fore and Aft had been doing all that mortal commander could expect. They had lost heavily because they did not know how to set about their business with proper skill, but they had borne themselves gallantly, and this was their reward.

A young and sprightly Colour-Sergeant, who had begun to imagine himself a hero, offered his water-bottle to a Highlander whose tongue was black with thirst. "I drink with no cowards," answered the youngster huskily, and, turning to a Goorkha, said, "*Hya*, Johnny! Drink water got it?" The Goorkha grinned and passed his bottle. The Fore and Aft said no word.

They went back to camp when the field of strife had been a little mopped up and made presentable, and the Brigadier, who saw himself a Knight in three months, was the only soul who was complimentary to them. The Colonel was heart-broken, and the officers were savage and sullen.

"Well," said the Brigadier, "they are young troops, of course, and it was not unnatural that they should retire in disorder for a bit."

"Oh, my only Aunt Maria!" murmured a junior Staff Officer. "Retire in disorder! It was a bally run!"

"But they came again, as we all know," cooed

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the Brigadier, the Colonel's ashy-white face before him, "and they behaved as well as could possibly be expected. Behaved beautifully, indeed. I was watching them. It's not a matter to take to heart, Colonel. As some German General said of his men, they wanted to be shot over a little, that was all." To himself he said—"Now they're blooded I can give 'em responsible work. It's as well that they got what they did. 'Teach 'em more than half a dozen rifle flirtations, that will — later — run alone and bite. Poor old Colonel, though."

All that afternoon the heliograph winked and flickered on the hills, striving to tell the good news to a mountain forty miles away. And in the evening there arrived, dusty, sweating, and sore, a misguided Correspondent who had gone out to assist at a trumpery village-burning, and who had read off the message from afar, cursing his luck the while.

"Let's have the details somehow — as full as ever you can, please. It's the first time I've ever been left this campaign," said the Correspondent to the Brigadier; and the Brigadier, nothing loth, told him how an Army of Communication had been crumpled up, destroyed, and all but annihilated by the craft, strategy, wisdom, and foresight of the Brigadier.

But some say, and among these be the Goorkhas

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who watched on the hillside, that that battle was won by Jakin and Lew, whose little bodies were borne up just in time to fit two gaps at the head of the big ditch-grave for the dead under the heights of Jagai.

## JUDSON AND THE EMPIRE

Gloriana ! The Don may attack us  
Whenever his stomach be fain ;  
He must reach us before he can rack us . . .  
And where are the galleons of Spain ?

*Dobson.*

ONE of the many beauties of a democracy is its almost superhuman skill in developing troubles with other countries and finding its honour abraded in the process. A true democracy has a large contempt for all other lands that are governed by Kings and Queens and Emperors, and knows little and thinks less of their internal affairs. All it regards is its own dignity, which is its King, Queen, and Knave. So, sooner or later, an international difference ends in the common people, who have no dignity, shouting the common abuse of the street, which also has no dignity, across the seas in order to vindicate their own dignity. The consequences may or may not be war, but the chances do not favour peace.

An advantage in living in a civilised land which is really governed lies in the fact that all the Kings

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and Queens and Emperors of the continent are closely related by blood or marriage — are, in fact, one large family. A wise head of them knows that what appears to be a studied insult may be no more than some man's indigestion or woman's indisposition to be treated as such, and explained in quiet talk. Again, a popular demonstration, headed by King and Court, may mean nothing more than that so-and-so's people are out of hand for the minute. When a horse falls to kicking in a hunt-crowd at a gate, the rider does not dismount, but puts his open hand behind him, and the others draw aside. It is so with the rulers of men. In the old days they cured their own and their people's bad temper with fire and slaughter; but now that the fire is so long of range and the slaughter so large, they do other things, and few among their people guess how much they owe in mere life and money to what the slang of the minute calls "puppets" and "luxuries."

Once upon a time there was a little Power, the half-bankrupt wreck of a once great empire, that lost its temper with England, the whipping-boy of all the world, and behaved, as every one knows, most scandalously. But it is not generally known that that Power fought a pitched battle with England and won a glorious victory. The trouble began with the people. Their own misfortunes had been many, and for private rage it is always refreshing

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to find a vent in public swearing. Their national vanity had been deeply injured, and they thought of their ancient glories and the days when their fleets had first rounded the Cape of Storms, and their own newspapers called upon Camoens and urged them to extravagances. It was the gross, smooth, sleek, lying England that was checking their career of colonial expansion. They assumed at once that their ruler was in league with that country, and consequently they, his people, would forthwith become a Republic and colonially expand themselves as a free people should. This made plain, the people threw stones at the English Consuls and spat at English ladies, and cut off drunken sailors of our fleet in their ports and hammered them with oars, and made things very unpleasant for tourists at their customs, and threatened awful deaths to the consumptive invalids at Madeira, while the junior officers of the Army drank fruit-extracts and entered into blood-curdling conspiracies against their monarch, all with the object of being a Republic. Now the history of all the South American Republics shows that it is not good that Southern Europeans should be also Republicans. They glide too quickly into military despotism; and the propping of men against walls and shooting them in detachments can be arranged much more economically and with less effect on the death-rate by a hide-bound mon-

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archy. Still the performances of the Power as represented by its people were extremely inconvenient. It was the kicking horse in the crowd, and probably the rider explained that he could not check it. The people enjoyed all the glory of war with none of the risks, and the tourists who were stoned in their travels returned stolidly to England and told the "Times" that the police arrangements of foreign towns were defective.

This then was the state of affairs north of the Line. South it was more strained, for there the Powers were at direct issue: England, unable to go back because of the pressure of adventurous children behind her, and the actions of far-away adventurers who would not come to heel, but offering to buy out her rival; and the other Power, lacking men or money, stiff in the conviction that three hundred years of slave-holding and intermingling with the nearest natives gave an inalienable right to hold slaves and issue half-castes to all eternity. They had built no roads. Their towns were rotting under their hands; they had no trade worth the freight of a crazy steamer, and their sovereignty ran almost one musket-shot inland when things were peaceful. For these very reasons they raged all the more, and the things that they said and wrote about the manners and customs of the English would have driven a younger nation to the guns with a long red bill for wounded honour.



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It was then that Fate sent down in a twin-screw shallow-draft gunboat, designed for the defence of rivers, of some two hundred and seventy tons' displacement, Lieutenant Harrison Edward Judson, to be known for the future as Bai-Jove-Judson. His type of craft looked exactly like a flat-iron with a match stuck up in the middle ; it drew five feet of water or less, carried a four-inch gun forward, which was trained by the ship, and, on account of its persistent rolling, was to live in three degrees worse than a torpedo-boat. When Judson was appointed to take charge of the thing on her little trip of six or seven thousand miles southward, his first remark as he went to look her over in dock was, "Bai Jove, that topmast wants staying forward !" The topmast was a stick about as thick as a clothes-prop, but the flat-iron was Judson's first command, and he would not have exchanged his position for second post on the *Anson* or the *Howe*. He navigated her, under convoy, tenderly and lovingly to the Cape (the story of the topmast came with him), and he was so absurdly in love with his wallowing wash-tub when he reported himself, that the Admiral of the station thought it would be a pity to kill a new man on her, and allowed Judson to continue in his unenvied rule.

The Admiral visited her once in Simon's Bay, and she was bad, even for a flat-iron gunboat strictly designed for river and harbour defence.

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She sweated clammy drops of dew between decks in spite of a preparation of powdered cork that was sprinkled over her inside paint. She rolled in the long Cape swell like a buoy; her foc's'le was a dog-kennel; Judson's cabin was practically under the water-line; not one of her dead-lights could ever be opened; and her compasses, thanks to the influence of the four-inch gun, were a curiosity even among Admiralty compasses. But Bai-Jove-Judson was radiant and enthusiastic. He had even contrived to fill Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, who was his chief engineer, with the glow of his passion. The Admiral, who remembered his own first command, when pride forbade him to slacken off a single rope on a dewy night, and he had racked his rigging to pieces in consequence, looked at the flat-iron keenly. Her fenders were done all over with white sennit which was truly white; her big gun was varnished with a better composition than the Admiralty allowed; the spare sights were cased as carefully as the chronometers; the chocks for spare spars, two of them, were made of four-inch Burma teak carved with dragons' heads that was one result of Bai-Jove-Judson's experiences with the Naval Brigade in the Burmese war; the bow-anchor was varnished instead of being painted, and there were charts more than the Admiralty scale supplied. The Admiral was well pleased, for he loved a ship's husband — a man

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who had a little money of his own and was willing to spend it on his command. Judson looked at him hopefully. He was only a Junior Navigating Lieutenant under eight years' standing. He might be kept in Simon's Bay for six months, and his ship at sea was his delight. The dream of his heart was to enliven her dismal official gray with a line of gold-leaf and perhaps a little scroll-work at her blunt barge-like bows.

"There's nothing like a first command, is there?" said the Admiral, reading his thoughts. "You seem to have rather queer compasses, though. Better get them adjusted."

"It's no use, sir," said Judson. "The gun would throw out the Pole itself. But—but I've got the hang of most of their weaknesses."

"Will you be good enough to lay that gun over thirty degrees, please?" The gun was put over. Round and round and round went the needle merrily, and the Admiral whistled.

"You must have kept close to your convoy?"

"Saw her twice between here and Madeira, sir," said Judson with a flush, for he resented the slur on his seamanship. "It's—it's a little out of hand, now, but she'll settle down after a while."

The Admiral went over the side, according to the rules of the Service, but the Staff-Captain must have told the other men of the squadron in Simon's Bay, for they one and all made light

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of the flat-iron for many days. "What can you shake out of her, Judson?" said the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose*, a real white-painted, ram-bow gunboat with quick-firing guns, as he came into the upper verandah of the little naval Club overlooking the dockyard one hot afternoon. It is in that Club as the captains come and go that you hear all the gossip of all the Seven Seas.

"Ten point four," said Bai-Jove-Judson.

"Ah! That was on her trial trip. She's too deep by the head now. I told you staying that topmast would throw her out of trim."

"You leave my top-hamper alone," said Judson, for the joke was beginning to pall on him.

"Oh, my soul! Listen to him. Juddy's top-hamper! Keate, have you heard of the flat-iron's top-hamper? You're to leave it alone. Commodore Judson's feelings are hurt."

Keate was the Torpedo Lieutenant of the big *Vortigern*, and he despised small things. "His top-hamper," said he slowly. "Oh, ah yes, of course. Juddy, there's a shoal of mullet in the bay, and I think they're foul of your screws. Better go down, or they'll carry away something."

"I don't let things carry away as a rule. You see *I've* no Torpedo Lieutenant on board, thank God!"

Keate within the past week had so managed to bungle the slinging in of a small torpedo-boat on

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the *Vortigern*, that the boat had broken the crutches in which she rested, and was herself being repaired in the dockyard under the Club windows.

“One for you, Keate. Never mind, Juddy; you’re hereby appointed dockyard-tender for the next three years, and if you’re very good and there’s no sea on, you shall take me round the harbour. Waitabeechee, Commodore. What’ll you take? Vanderhum for the ‘Cook and the captain bold, And the mate o’ the *Nancy* brig, And the bo’sun tight’ (Juddy, put that cue down or I’ll put you under arrest for insulting the lieutenant of the real ship) ‘And the midshipmite, And the crew of the captain’s gig.’”

By this time Judson had pinned him in a corner, and was prodding him with the half-butt. The Admiral’s Secretary entered, and saw the scuffle from afar.

“Ouch! Juddy, I apologise. Take that-er topmast of yours away! Here’s the man with the bow-string. I wish I were a staff-captain instead of a bloody lootenant. Sperril sleeps below every night. That’s what makes Sperril tumble home from the waist upwards. Sperril, I defy you to touch me. I’m under orders for Zanzibar. Probably I shall annex it!”

“Judson, the Admiral wants to see you!” said the Staff-Captain, disregarding the scoffer of the *Mongoose*.

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"I told you you'd be a dockyard-tender yet, Juddy. A side of fresh beef to-morrow and three dozen snapper on ice. On ice, you understand, Juddy?"

Bai-Jove-Judson and the Staff-Captain went out together.

"Now, what does the Admiral want with Judson?" said Keate from the bar.

"Don't know. Juddy's a damned good fellow, though. I wish to goodness he was on the *Mongoose* with us."

The Lieutenant of the *Mongoose* dropped into a chair and read the mail papers for an hour. Then he saw Bai-Jove-Judson in the street and shouted to him. Judson's eyes were very bright, and his figure was held very straight, and he moved joyously. Except for the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose*, the Club was empty.

"Juddy, there will be a beautiful row," said that young man when he had heard the news delivered in an undertone. "You'll probably have to fight, and yet I can't see what the Admiral's thinking of to ——"

"My orders are not to fight under any circumstances," said Judson.

"Go-look-see? That all? When do you go?"

"To-night if I can. I must go down and see about things. I say, I may want a few men for the day."



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“Anything on the *Mongoose* is at your service. There’s my gig come in now. I know that coast, dead, drunk, or asleep, and you’ll need all the knowledge you can get. If it had only been us two together! Come over with me!”

For one whole hour Judson remained closeted in the stern cabin of the *Mongoose*, listening, poring over chart upon chart and taking notes, and for an hour the marine at the door heard nothing but things like these: “Now you’ll have to put in here if there’s any sea on. That current is ridiculously under-estimated, and it sets *west* at this season of the year, remember. Their boats never come south of this, see? So it’s no good looking out for them.” And so on and so forth, while Judson lay at length on the locker by the three-pounder, and smoked and absorbed it all.

Next morning there was no flat-iron in Simon’s Bay, only a little smudge of smoke off Cape Hangklip to show that Mr. Davies, the second-class engine-room artificer, was giving her all she could carry. At the Admiral’s house, the ancient and retired bo’sun, who had seen many Admirals come and go, brought out his paint and brushes and gave a new coat of pure raw pea-green to the two big cannon-balls that stood one on each side of the Admiral’s entrance-gate. He felt dimly that great events were stirring.

And the flat-iron, constructed, as has been



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before said, solely for the defense of rivers, met the great roll off Cape Agulhas and was swept from end to end and sat upon her twin-screws and leaped as gracefully as a cow in a bog from one sea to another, till Mr. Davies began to fear for the safety of his engines, and the Kroo boys that made the majority of the crew were deathly sick. She ran along a very badly-lighted coast, past bays that were no bays, where ugly flat-topped rocks lay almost level with the water, and very many extraordinary things happened that have nothing to do with the story, but they were all duly logged by Bai-Jove-Judson.

At last the coast changed and grew green and low and exceedingly muddy, and there were broad rivers whose bars were little islands standing three or four miles out at sea, and Bai-Jove-Judson hugged the shore more closely than ever, remembering what the Lieutenant of the *Mongoose* had told him. Then he found a river full of the smell of fever and mud, with green stuff growing far into its waters, and a current that made the flat-iron gasp and grunt.

"We will turn up here," said Bai-Jove-Judson, and they turned up accordingly; Mr. Davies wondering what in the world it all meant, and the Kroo boys grinning. Bai-Jove-Judson went forward to the bows and meditated, staring through the muddy waters. After six hours of rooting through

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this desolation at an average rate of five miles an hour, his eyes were cheered by the sight of one white buoy in the coffee-hued mid-stream. The flat-iron crept up to it cautiously, and a leadsman took soundings all around it from a dinghy, while Bai-Jove-Judson smoked and thought, with his head on one side.

"About seven feet, isn't there?" said he. "That must be the tail end of the shoal. There's four fathom in the fairway. Knock that buoy down with axes. I don't think it's picturesque somehow." The Kroo men hacked the wooden sides to pieces in three minutes, and the mooring-chain sank with the last splinters of wood. Bai-Jove-Judson laid the flat-iron carefully over the site, while Mr. Davies watched, biting his nails nervously.

"Can you back her against this current?" said Bai-Jove-Judson. Mr. Davies could, inch by inch, but only inch by inch, and Bai-Jove-Judson sat in the bows and gazed at various things on the bank as they came into line or opened out. The flat-iron dropped down over the tail of the shoal, exactly where the buoy had been, and backed once before Bai-Jove-Judson was satisfied. Then they went up stream for half an hour, put into shoal water by the bank and waited, with a slip-rope on the anchor.

"Seems to me," said Mr. Davies deferentially,

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"like as if I heard some one a-firing off at intervals, so to say."

There was beyond doubt a dull mutter in the air.

"Seems to me," said Bai-Jove-Judson, "as if I heard a screw. Stand by to slip her moorings."

Another ten minutes passed and the beat of engines grew plainer. Then round the bend of the river came a remarkably prettily built white-painted gunboat with a blue and white flag bearing a red boss in the centre.

"Unshackle abaft the windlass! Stream both buoys! Easy, astern. Let go, all!" The slip-rope flew out, the two buoys bobbed in the water to mark where anchor and cable had been left, and the flat-iron waddled out into midstream with the white ensign at her one mast-head.

"Give her all you can. That thing has the legs of us," said Judson. "And down we go!"

"It's war — bloody war. He's going to fire," said Mr. Davies, looking up through the engine-room hatch.

The white gunboat without a word of explanation fired three guns at the flat-iron, cutting the trees on the banks into green chips. Bai-Jove-Judson was at the wheel, and Mr. Davies and the current helped the boat to an almost respectable degree of speed.

It was an exciting chase, but it did not last for more than five minutes. The white gunboat fired

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again, and Mr. Davies in his engine-room gave a wild shout.

“What’s the matter? Hit?” said Bai-Jove-Judson.

“No, I’ve just seized of your roos-de-gare. Beg y’ pardon, sir.”

“Right O! Just the half a fraction of a point more.” The wheel turned under the steady hand, as Bai-Jove-Judson watched his marks on the bank coming in line swiftly as troops anxious to aid. The flat-iron smelt the shoal water under her, checked for an instant, and went on. “Now we’re over. Come along, you thieves, there!”

The white gunboat, too hurried even to fire, was storming in the wake of the flat-iron, steering as she steered. This was unfortunate, because the lighter craft was dead over the missing buoy.

“What you do here?” shouted a voice from the bows.

“I’m going on. Hold tight. Now you’re arranged for!”

There was a crash and a clatter as the white gunboat’s nose took the shoal, and the brown mud boiled up in oozy circles under her forefoot. Then the current caught her stern by the starboard side and drove her broadside on to the shoal, slowly and gracefully. There she heeled at an undignified angle, and her crew yelled aloud.

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"Neat! Oh, damn neat!" quoth Mr. Davies, dancing on the engine-room plates, while the Kroo stokers grinned.

The flat-iron turned up-stream again, and passed under the hove-up starboard side of the white gunboat, to be received with howls and imprecations in a strange tongue. The stranded boat, exposed even to her lower strakes, was as defenceless as a turtle on its back, without the advantage of the turtle's plating. And the one big blunt gun in the bows of the flat-iron was unpleasantly near.

But the captain was valiant and swore mightily. Bai-Jove-Judson took no sort of notice. His business was to go up the river.

"We will come in a flotilla of boats and ecraser your vile tricks," said the captain with language that need not be published.

Then said Bai-Jove-Judson, who was a linguist: "You stay o where you are o, or I'll leave a hole-o in your bottom o that will make you much os perforatados."

There was a great deal of mixed language in reply, but Bai-Jove-Judson was out of hearing in a few minutes, and Mr. Davies, himself a man of few words, confided to one of his subordinates that Lieutenant Judson was "a most remarkable prompt officer in a way of putting it."

For two hours the flat-iron pawed madly

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through the muddy water, and that which had been at first a mutter became a distinct rumble.

"Was war declared?" said Mr. Davies, and Bai-Jove-Judson laughed. "Then, damn his eyes, he might have spoilt my pretty little engines. There's war up there, though."

The next bend brought them full in sight of a small but lively village, built round a white-washed mud house of some pretensions. There were scores and scores of saddle-coloured soldiery on duty, white uniforms running to and fro and shouting round a man in a litter, and on a gentle slope that ran inland for four or five miles something like a brisk battle was raging round a rude stockade. A smell of unburied carcasses floated through the air and vexed the sensitive nose of Mr. Davies, who spat over the side.

"I want to get this gun on that house," said Bai-Jove-Judson, indicating the superior dwelling over whose flat roof floated the blue and white flag. The little twin screws kicked up the water exactly as a hen's legs kick in the dust before she settles down to a bath. The little boat moved uneasily from left to right, backed, yawed again, went ahead, and at last the gray blunt gun's nose was held as straight as a rifle-barrel on the mark indicated. Then Mr. Davies allowed the whistle to speak as it is not allowed to speak in Her Majesty's service on account of waste of steam. The



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soldiery of the village gathered into knots and groups and bunches, and the firing up the hill ceased, and every one except the crew of the flat-iron yelled aloud. Something like an English cheer came down wind.

“Our chaps in mischief for sure, probably,” said Mr. Davies. “They must have declared war weeks ago, in a kind of way, seems to me.”

“Hold her steady, you son of a soldier!” shouted Bai-Jove-Judson, as the muzzle fell off the white house.

Something rang as loudly as a ship’s bell on the forward plates of the flat-iron, something spluttered in the water, and another thing cut a groove in the deck planking an inch in front of Bai-Jove-Judson’s left foot. The saddle-coloured soldiery were firing as the mood took them, and the man in the litter waved a shining sword. The muzzle of the big gun kicked down a fraction as it was laid on the mud wall at the bottom of the house garden. Ten pounds of gunpowder shut up in a hundred pounds of metal was its charge. Three or four yards of the mud wall jumped up a little, as a man jumps when he is caught in the small of the back with a knee-cap, and then fell forward, spreading fan-wise in the fall. The soldiery fired no more that day, and Judson saw an old black woman climb to the flat roof of the house. She fumbled for a time with the flag halliards, then



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finding that they were jammed, took off her one garment, which happened to be an Isabella-coloured petticoat, and waved it impatiently. The man in the litter flourished a white handkerchief, and Bai-Jove-Judson grinned. "Now we'll give 'em one up the hill. Round with her, Mr. Davies. Curse the man who invented those floating gun platforms. Where can I pitch in a notice without slaying one of those little devils?"

The side of the slope was speckled with men returning in a disorderly fashion to the river front. Behind them marched a small but very compact body of men who had filed out of the stockade. These last dragged quick-firing guns with them.

"Bai Jove, it's a regular army. I wonder whose," said Bai-Jove-Judson, and he waited developments. The descending troops met and mixed with the troops in the village, and, with the litter in the centre, crowded down to the river, till the men with the quick-firing guns came up behind them. Then they divided left and right and the detachment marched through.

"Heave these damned things over!" said the leader of the party, and one after another ten little gatlings splashed into the muddy water. The flat-iron lay close to the bank.

"When you're quite done," said Bai-Jove-Judson politely, "would you mind telling me what's the matter? I'm in charge here."

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"We're the Pioneers of the General Development Company," said the leader. "These little bounders have been hammering us in lager for twelve hours, and we're getting rid of their gatlings. Had to climb out and take them; but they've snaffled the lock-actions. Glad to see you."

"Any one hurt?"

"No one killed exactly, but we're very dry."

"Can you hold your men?"

The man turned round and looked at his command with a grin. There were seventy of them, all dusty and unkempt.

"We sha'n't sack this ash-bin, if that's what you mean. We're mostly gentlemen here, though we don't look it."

"All right. Send the head of this post, or fort, or village, or whatever it is, aboard, and make what arrangements you can for your men."

"We'll find some barrack accommodation somewhere. Hullo! You in the litter there, go aboard the gunboat." The command wheeled round, pushed through the dislocated soldiery, and began to search through the village for spare huts.

The little man in the litter came aboard smiling nervously. He was in the fullest of full uniform, with many yards of gold lace and dangling chains. Also he wore very large spurs; the nearest horse being not more than four hundred miles

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away. "My children," said he, facing the silent soldiery, "lay aside your arms."

Most of the men had dropped them already and were sitting down to smoke. "Let nothing," he added in his own tongue, "tempt you to kill these who have sought your protection."

"Now," said Bai-Jove-Judson, on whom the last remark was lost, "will you have the goodness to explain what the deuce you mean by all this nonsense?"

"It was of a necessitate," said the little man. "The operations of war are unconformible. I am the Governor and I operate Captain. Be'old my little sword."

"Confound your little sword, sir. I don't want it. You've fired on our flag. You've been firing at our people here for a week, and I've been fired at coming up the river."

"Ah! The *Guadala*. She have misconstrued you for a slaver possibly. How are the *Guadala*?"

"Mistook a ship of Her Majesty's navy for a slaver! *You* mistake *any* craft for a slaver! Bai Jove, sir, I've a good mind to hang you at the yard-arm!"

There was nothing nearer that terrible spar than the walking-stick in the rack of Judson's cabin. The Governor looked at the one mast and smiled a deprecating smile.

"The position is embarrassment," he said.

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“Captain, do you think those illustrious traders burn my capital? My people will give them beer.”

“Never mind the traders, I want an explanation.”

“Hum! There are popular uprising in Europe, Captain—in my country.” His eye wandered aimlessly round the horizon.

“What has that to do with ——”

“Captain, you are very young. There is still uproariment. But I”—here he slapped his chest till his epaulets jingled—“I am loyalist to pits of *all* my stomachs.”

“Go on,” said Judson, and his mouth quivered.

“An order arrive to me to establish a custom-houses here, and to collect of the taximent from the traders when she are come here necessarily. That was on account of political understandings with your country and mine. But on that arrangement there was no money also. Not one damn little cowrie. I desire damnably to extend all commercial things, and why? I am loyalist and there is rebellion—yes, I tell you—Republics in my country for to just begin. You do not believe? See some time how it exist. I cannot make this custom-houses and pay the so high-paid officials. The people too in my country they say the king she has no regardance into Honour of her nation. He throw away everything—Gladstone her all, you say, pay?”

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“Yes, that’s what we say,” said Judson with a grin.

“Therefore they say, let us be Republics on hot cakes. But I—I am loyalist to all my hands’ ends. Captain, once I was attaché at Mexico. I say the Republics are no good. The peoples have her stomach high. They desire—they desire—a course for the bills.”

“What on earth is that?”

“The cock-fight for pay at the gate. You give something, pay for see bloody row. Do I make its comprehension?”

“A run for their money—is that what you mean? Gad, you’re sporting, Governor.”

“So I say. I am loyalist, too.” He smiled more easily. “Now how can anything do herself for the customs-houses; but when the Company’s mens she arrives, *then* a cock-fight for pay at gate that is quite correct. My army he says it will Republic and shoot me off upon walls if I have not give her blood. An army, Captain, are terrible in her angries—especialment when she are not paid. I know, too,” here he laid his hand on Judson’s shoulder, “I know too we are old friends. Yes! Badajos, Almeida, Fuentes d’Onor—time ever since; and a little, little cock-fight for pay at gate that is good for my king. More sit her tight on throne behind, you see? Now,” he waved his hand round the decayed village, “I say to my

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armies, Fight! Fight the Company's men when she come, but fight not so very strong that you are any deads. It is all in the raporta that I send. But you understand, Captain, we are good friends all the time. Ah! Ciudad Rodrigo, you remember? No? Perhaps your father, then? So you see no one are deads, and we fight a fight, and it is all in the raporta, to please the people in our country, and my armies they do not put me against the walls. You see?"

"Yes; but the *Guadala*. She fired on us. Was that part of your game, my joker?"

"The *Guadala*. Ah! No, I think not. Her captain he is too big fool. But I think she have gone down the coast. Those your gunboats poke her nose and shove her oar in every place. How is *Guadala*?"

"On a shoal. Stuck till I take her off."

"There are any deads?"

"No."

The Governor drew a breath of deep relief. "There are no deads here. So you see none are deads anywhere, and nothing is done. Captain, you talk to the Company's mens. I think they are not pleased."

"Naturally."

"They have no sense. I thought to go backwards again they would. I leave her stockade alone all night to let them out, but they stay and

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come facewards to me, not backwards. They did not know we must conquer much in all these battles, or the king, he is kicked off her throne. Now we have won this battle — this great battle,” he waved his arms abroad, “and I think you will say so that we have won, Captain. You are loyalist also. You would not disturb to the peaceful Europe? Captain, I tell you this. Your Queen she know too. She would not fight her cousins. It is a — a hand-up thing.”

“What?”

“Hand-up thing. Jobe you put. How you say?”

“Put-up job?”

“Yes. Put-up job. Who is hurt? We win. You lose. All righta?”

Bai-Jove-Judson had been exploding at intervals for the last five minutes. Here he broke down completely and roared aloud.

“But look here, Governor,” he said at last, “I’ve got to think of other things than your riots in Europe. You’ve fired on our flag.”

“Captain, if you are me, you would have done how? And also, and also,” he drew himself up to his full height, “we are both brave men of bravest countries. Our honour is the honour of our King,” here he uncovered, “and of our Queen,” here he bowed low. “Now, Captain, you shall shell my palace and I shall be your prisoner.”



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“Skittles!” said Bai-Jove-Judson. “I can’t shell that old hencoop.”

“Then come to dinner. Madeira, she are still to us, and I have of the best she manufac.”

He skipped over the side beaming, and Bai-Jove-Judson went into the cabin to laugh his laugh out. When he had recovered a little he sent Mr. Davies to the head of the *Pioneers*, the dusty man with the gatlings, and the troops who had abandoned the pursuit of arms watched the disgraceful spectacle of two men reeling with laughter on the quarter-deck of a gunboat.

“I’ll put my men to build him a custom-house,” said the head of the *Pioneers*, gasping. “We’ll make him one decent road at least. That Governor ought to be knighted. I’m glad now that we didn’t fight ’em in the open, or we’d have killed some of them. So he’s won great battles, has he? Give him the compliments of the victims, and tell him I’m coming to dinner. You haven’t such a thing as a dress-suit, have you? I haven’t seen one for six months.”

That evening there was a dinner in the village — a general and enthusiastic dinner, whose head was in the Governor’s house, and whose tail threshed at large throughout all the streets. The Madeira was everything that the Governor had said, and more, and it was tested against two or three bottles of Bai-Jove-Judson’s best Vanderhum, which is Cape

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brandy ten years in the bottle, flavoured with orange-peel and spices. Before the coffee was removed (by the lady who had made the flag of truce) the Governor had sold the whole of his governorship and its appurtenances, once to Bai-Jove-Judson for services rendered by Judson's grandfather in the Peninsular War, and once to the head of the Pioneers, in consideration of that gentleman's good friendship. After the negotiation he retreated for a while into an inner apartment, and there evolved a true and complete account of the defeat of the British arms, which he read with his cocked hat over one eye to Judson and his companion. It was Judson who suggested the sinking of the flat-iron with all hands, and the head of the Pioneers who supplied the list of killed and wounded (not more than two hundred) in his command.

"Gentlemen," said the Governor from under his cocked hat, "the peace of Europe are saved by this raporta. You shall all be Knights of the Golden Hide. She shall go by the *Guadala*."

"Great Heavens!" said Bai-Jove Judson, flushed but composed, "that reminds me I've left that boat stuck on her broadside down the river. I must go down and soothe the commandante. He'll be blue with rage. Governor, let us go a sail on the river to cool our heads. A picnic, you understand."

"Ya — as, everything I understand. Ho! A

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picnica! You are all my prisoner, but I am good gaoler. We shall picnic on the river, and we shall take all the girls. Come on, my prisoners."

"I do hope," said the head of the Pioneers, starting from the verandah into the roaring village, "that my chaps won't set the town alight by accident. Hullo! Hullo! A guard of honour for His Excellency the most illustrious Governor!"

Some thirty men answered the call, made a swaying line upon a more swaying course, and bore the Governor most swayingly of all high in the arms as they staggered down to the river. And the song that they sang bade them, "Swing, swing together their body between their knees"; and they obeyed the words of the song faithfully, except that they were anything but "steady from stroke to bow." His Excellency the Governor slept on his uneasy litter, and did not wake when the chorus dropped him on the deck of the flat-iron.

"Good-night and good-bye," said the head of the Pioneers to Judson; "I'd give you my card if I had it, but I'm so damned drunk I hardly know my own club. Oh, yes! It's the Travellers. If ever we meet in Town, remember me. I must stay here and look after my fellows. We're all right in the open, now. I s'pose you'll return the Governor some time. This is a political crisis. Good-night."

The flat-iron went down stream through the

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dark. The Governor slept on deck, and Judson took the wheel, but how he steered, and why he did not run into each bank many times, that officer does not remember. Mr. Davies did not note anything unusual, for there are two ways of taking too much, and Judson was only ward-room, not foc's'le drunk. As the night grew colder the Governor woke up, and expressed a desire for whiskey and soda. When that came they were nearly abreast of the stranded *Guadala*, and His Excellency saluted the flag that he could not see with loyal and patriotic strains.

"They do not see. They do not hear," he cried. "Ten thousand saints! They sleep, and I have won battles! Ha!"

He started forward to the gun, which, very naturally, was loaded, pulled the lanyard, and woke the dead night with the roar of the full charge behind a common shell. That shell mercifully just missed the stern of the *Guadala*, and burst on the bank. "Now you shall salute your Governor," said he, as he heard feet running in all directions within the iron skin. "Why you demand so base a quarter? I am here with all my prisoners."

In the hurly-burly and the general shriek for mercy his reassurances were not heard.

"Captain," said a grave voice from the ship, "we have surrendered. Is it the custom of the English to fire on a helpless ship?"

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“Surrendered! Holy Virgin! I go to cut off all their heads. You shall be ate by wild ants — flogged and drowned. Throw me a balcony. It is I, the Governor! You shall never surrender. Judson of my soul, ascend her insides, and send me a bed, for I am sleepy; but, oh, I will multiple time kill that captain!”

“Oh!” said the voice in the darkness, “I begin to comprehend.” And a rope-ladder was thrown, up which the Governor scrambled, with Judson at his heels.

“Now we will enjoy executions,” said the Governor on the deck. “All these Republicans shall be shot. Little Judson, if I am *not* drunk, why are so sloping the boards which do not support?”

The deck, as I have said, was at a very stiff cant. His Excellency sat down, slid to leeward, and was asleep again.

The captain of the *Guadala* bit his moustache furiously, and muttered in his own tongue: “This land is the father of great villains and the step-father of honest men. You see our material, Captain. It is so everywhere with us. You have killed some of the rats, I hope?”

“Not a rat,” said Judson genially.

“That is a pity. If they were dead, our country might send us men; but our country is dead too, and I am dishonoured on a mud-bank through your English treachery.”

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“Well, it seems to me that firing on a little tub of our size without a word of warning, when you know that the countries were at peace, is treachery enough in a small way.”

“If one of my guns had touched you, you would have gone to the bottom, all of you. I would have taken the risk with my Government. By that time it would have been ——”

“A Republic? So you really did mean fighting on your own hook? You’re rather a dangerous officer to cut loose in a navy like yours. Well, what are you going to do now?”

“Stay here. Go away in boats. What does it matter? That drunken cat” — he pointed to the shadow in which the Governor slept — “is here. I must take him back to his hole.”

“Very good. I’ll tow you off at daylight if you get steam ready.”

“Captain, I warn you that as soon as she floats again I will fight you.”

“Humbug! You’ll have lunch with me, and then you’ll take the Governor up the river.”

The captain was silent for some time. Then he said: “Let us drink. What must be, must be; and after all we have not forgotten the Peninsula. You will admit, Captain, that it is bad to be run upon a shoal like a mud-dredger?”

“Oh, we’ll pull you off before you can say knife.



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Take care of His Excellency. I shall try to get a little sleep now."

They slept on both ships till the morning, and then the work of towing off the *Guadala* began. With the help of her own engines, and the tugging and puffing of the flat-iron, she slid off the mud-bank sideways into the deep water, the flat-iron immediately under her stern, and the big eye of the four-inch gun almost peering through the window of the captain's cabin.

Remorse in the shape of a violent headache had overtaken the Governor. He was uneasily conscious that he might, perhaps, have exceeded his powers; and the captain of the *Guadala*, in spite of all his patriotic sentiments, remembered distinctly that no war had been declared between the two countries. He did not need the Governor's repeated reminders that war, serious war, meant a Republic at home, possible supersession in his command, and much shooting of living men against dead walls.

"We have satisfied our honour," said the Governor in confidence. "Our army is appeased, and the raporta that you take home will show that we were loyal and brave. That other captain? Bah! he is a boy. He will call this a — a —. Judson of my soul, how you say this is — all this affairs which have transpired between us?"

Judson was watching the last hawser slipping



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through the fairlead. "Call it? Oh, I should call it rather a lark. Now your boat's all right, Captain. When will you come to lunch?"

"I told you," said the Governor, "it would be a larque to him."

"Mother of the Saints! then what is his seriousness?" said the captain. "We shall be happy to come when you please. Indeed, we have no other choice," he added bitterly.

"Not at all," said Judson, and as he looked at the three or four shot-blisters on the bows of his boat a brilliant idea took him. "It is we who are at your mercy. See how His Excellency's guns knocked us about."

"Señor Captain," said the Governor pityingly, "that is very sad. You are most injured, and your deck too, it is all shot over. We shall not be too severe on a beat man, shall we, Captain?"

"You couldn't spare us a little paint, could you? I'd like to patch up a little after the—action," said Judson meditatively, fingering his upper lip to hide a smile.

"Our store-room is at your disposition," said the captain of the *Guadala*, and his eye brightened; for a few lead splashes on gray paint make a big show.

"Mr. Davies, go aboard and see what they have to spare—to spare, remember. Their spar-colour with a little working up should be just our free-board tint."

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“Oh, yes. I’ll spare them,” said Mr. Davies savagely. “I don’t understand this how-d’you-do and damn-your-eyes business coming one atop of the other in a manner o’ speaking. By all rights, they’re our lawful prize.”

The Governor and the captain came to lunch in the absence of Mr. Davies. Bai-Jove-Judson had not much to offer, but what he had was given as by a beaten foeman to a generous conqueror. When they were a little warmed — the Governor genial and the captain almost effusive — he explained, quite casually, over the opening of a bottle that it would not be to his interest to report the affair seriously, and it was in the highest degree improbable that the Admiral would treat it in any grave fashion.

“When my decks are cut up” (there was one groove across four planks), “and my plates buckled” (there were five lead patches on three plates), “and I meet such a boat as the *Guadala*, and a mere accident saves me from being blown out of the water ——”

“Yes. A mere accident, Captain. The shoal-buoy has been lost,” said the captain of the *Guadala*.

“Ah? I do not know this river. That was very sad. But as I was saying, when an accident saves me from being sunk, what can I do but go away — if that is possible? But I fear that I

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have no coal for the sea voyage. It is very sad." Judson had compromised on what he knew of the French tongue as a working language.

"It is enough," said the Governor, waving a generous hand. "Judson of my soul, the coal is yours, and you shall be repaired — yes, repaired all over of your battle's wounds. You shall go with all the honours of all the wars. Your flag shall fly. Your drum shall beat. Your, ah! — jolly boys shall spoke their bayonets. Is it not so, Captain?"

"As you say, Excellency. But the traders in the town. What of them?"

The Governor looked puzzled for an instant. He could not quite remember what had happened to those jovial men who had cheered him over night. Judson interrupted swiftly: "His Excellency has set them to forced works on barracks and magazines, and, I think, a custom-house. When that is done they will be released, I hope, Excellency."

"Yes, they shall be released for your sake, little Judson of my heart." Then they drank the health of their respective sovereigns, while Mr. Davies superintended the removal of the scarred plank and the shot-marks on the deck and the bow-plates.

"Oh, this is too bad," said Judson when they went on deck. "That idiot has exceeded his in-

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structions, but — but you must let me pay for this!”

Mr. Davies, his legs in the water as he sat on a staging slung over the bows, was acutely conscious that he was being blamed in a foreign tongue. He smiled uneasily, and went on with his work.

“What is it?” said the Governor.

“That thick-head has thought that we needed some gold-leaf, and he has borrowed that from your storeroom, but I must make it good.” Then in English, “Stand up, Mr. Davies. What the — in — do you mean by taking their gold-leaf? My —, are we a set of — pirates to scrape the — guts out of a — Levantine bumboat? Look contrite, you butt-ended, broad-breeched, bottle-bellied, swivel-eyed son of a tinker, you! My Soul alive, can’t I maintain discipline in my own ship without a — blacksmith of a boiler-riveter putting me to shame before a yellow-nosed picaroon. Get off the staging, Mr. Davies, and go to the engine-room. Put down that leaf first, though, and leave the books where they are. I’ll send for you in a minute. Go aft!”

Now, only the upper half of Mr. Davies’s round face was above the bulwarks when this torrent of abuse descended upon him; and it rose inch by inch as the shower continued: blank amazement, bewilderment, rage, and injured pride chasing each other across it till he saw his superior officer’s left

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eyelid flutter on the cheek twice. Then he fled to the engine-room, and wiping his brow with a handful of cotton-waste, sat down to overtake circumstances.

"I am desolated," said Judson to his companions, "but you see the material that you give us. This leaves me more in your debt than before. The stuff I can replace" (gold-leaf is never carried on floating gun-platforms), "but for the insolence of that man how shall I apologise?"

Mr. Davies's mind moved slowly, but after a while he transferred the cotton-waste from his forehead to his mouth and bit on it to prevent laughter. He began a second dance on the engine-room plates. "Neat! Oh, damned neat!" he chuckled. "I've served with a good few, but there never was one so neat as him. And I thought he was the new kind that don't know how to put a few words, as it were!"

"Mr. Davies, you can continue your work," said Judson down the engine-room hatch. "These officers have been good enough to speak in your favour. Make a thorough job of it while you are about it. Slap on every man you have. Where did you get hold of it?"

"Their storeroom is a regular theatre, sir. You couldn't miss it. There's enough for two first-rates, and I've scoffed the best half of it."

"Look sharp, then. We shall be coaling from her this afternoon. You'll have to cover it all."

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“Neat! Oh, damned neat!” said Mr. Davies under his breath, as he gathered his subordinates together, and set about accomplishing the long-deferred wish of Judson’s heart.

. . . . .

It was the *Martin Frobisher*, the flag-ship, a great war-boat when she was new, in the days when men built for sail as well as for steam. She could turn twelve knots under full sail, and it was under that that she stood up the mouth of the river, a pyramid of silver beneath the moon. The Admiral, fearing that he had given Judson a task beyond his strength, was coming to look for him, and incidentally to do a little diplomatic work along the coast. There was hardly wind enough to move the *Frobisher* a couple of knots an hour, and the silence of the land closed about her as she entered the fairway. Her yards sighed a little from time to time, and the ripple under her bows answered the sigh. The full moon rose over the steaming swamps, and the Admiral, gazing upon it, thought less of Judson and more of the softer emotions. In answer to the very mood of his mind, there floated across the silver levels of the water, mellowed by distance to a most poignant sweetness, the throb of a mandolin, and the voice of one who called upon a genteel Julia—upon Julia, and upon love. The song ceased, and the sighing

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of the yards was all that broke the silence of the big ship.

Again the mandolin began, and the commander on the lee side of the quarter-deck grinned a grin that was reflected in the face of the signal-midshipman. Not a word of the song was lost, and the voice of the singer was the voice of Judson.

“Last week down our alley came a toff,  
Nice old geyser with a nasty cough,  
Sees my missus, takes his topper off,  
Quite in a gentlemanly way” —

and so on to the end of the verse. The chorus was borne by several voices, and the signal-midshipman's foot began to tap the deck furtively.

“ ‘What cheer!’ all the neighbours cried.  
‘Oo are you going to meet, Bill?  
‘Ave you bought the street, Bill?’  
Laugh? — I thought I should ha’ died  
When I knocked ’em in the old Kent Road.”

It was the Admiral's gig, rowing softly, that came into the midst of that merry little smoking-concert. It was Judson, the beribboned mandolin round his neck, who received the Admiral as he came up the side of the *Guadala*, and it may or may not have been the Admiral who stayed till two in the morning and delighted the hearts of



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the Captain and the Governor. He had come as an unbidden guest, and he departed as an honoured one, but strictly unofficial throughout. Judson told his tale next day in the Admiral's cabin as well as he could in the face of the Admiral's gales of laughter, but the most amazing tale was that told by Mr. Davies to his friends in the dockyard at Simon's Town from the point of view of a second-class engine-room artificer, all unversed in diplomacy.

And if there be no truth either in my tale, which is Judson's tale, or the tale of Mr. Davies, you will *not* find in harbour at Simon's Town to-day a flat-bottomed twin-screw gunboat, designed solely for the defence of rivers, about two hundred and seventy tons' displacement and five feet draught, wearing in open defiance of the rules of the Service a gold line on her gray paint. It follows also that you will be compelled to credit that version of the fray which, signed by His Excellency the Governor and despatched in the *Guadala*, satisfied the self-love of a great and glorious people, and saved a monarchy from the ill-considered despotism which is called a Republic.

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Life liveth but in life, and doth not roam  
To other lands if all be well at home :  
“ Solid as ocean foam,” quoth ocean foam.

THE room was blue with the smoke of three pipes and a cigar. The leave-season had opened in India, and the first-fruits on this side of the water were “ Tick ” Boileau, of the 45th Bengal Cavalry, who called on me, after three years’ absence, to discuss old things which had happened. Fate, who always does her work handsomely, sent up the same staircase within the same hour The Infant, fresh from Upper Burma, and he and Boileau looking out of my window saw walking in the street one Nevin, late in a Goorkha regiment which had been through the Black Mountain Expedition. They yelled to him to come up, and the whole street was aware that they desired him to come up, and he came up, and there followed Pandemonium in my room because we had foregathered from the ends of the earth, and three of us were on a holiday, and none of us were twenty-five, and all the delights of all London lay waiting our pleasure.

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Boileau took the only other chair, The Infant, by right of his bulk, the sofa; and Nevin, being a little man, sat cross-legged on the top of the revolving bookcase, and we all said, "Who'd ha' thought it!" and "What are you doing here?" till speculation was exhausted and the talk went over to inevitable "shop." Boileau was full of a great scheme for winning a military attaché-ship at St. Petersburg; Nevin had hopes of the Staff College, and The Infant had been moving heaven and earth and the Horse Guards for a commission in the Egyptian army.

"What's the use o' that?" said Nevin, twirling round on the bookcase.

"Oh, heaps! 'Course if you get stuck with a Fellaheen regiment, you're sold; but if you are appointed to a Soudanese lot, you're in clover. They are first-class fighting-men—and just think of the eligible central position of Egypt in the next row!"

This was putting the match to a magazine. We all began to explain the Central Asian question off-hand, flinging army corps from the Helmund to Kashmir with more than Russian recklessness. Each of the boys made for himself a war to his own liking, and when we had settled all the details of Armageddon, killed all our senior officers, handled a division apiece, and nearly torn the atlas in two in attempts to explain our theories, Boileau

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needs must lift up his voice above the clamour, and cry, "Anyhow it'll be the hell of a row!" in tones that carried conviction far down the staircase.

Entered, unperceived in the smoke, William the Silent. "Gen'elman to see you, sir," said he, and disappeared, leaving in his stead none other than Mr. Eustace Cleever. William would have introduced the Dragon of Wantley with equal disregard of present company.

"I—I beg your pardon. I didn't know that there was anybody—with you. I——"

But it was not seemly to allow Mr. Cleever to depart; he was a great man. The boys remained where they were, for any movement would have choked up the little room. Only when they saw his gray hairs they stood on their feet, and when The Infant caught the name, he said:

"Are you—did you write that book called 'As it was in the Beginning'?"

Mr. Cleever admitted that he had written the book.

"Then—then I don't know how to thank you, sir," said The Infant, flushing pink. "I was brought up in the country you wrote about—all my people live there; and I read the book in camp on the Hlinedatalone, and I knew every stick and stone, and the dialect too; and, by Jove! it was just like being at home and hearing the country-

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people talk. Nevin, you know 'As it was in the Beginning'? So does Ti — Boileau."

Mr. Cleever has tasted as much praise, public and private, as one man may safely swallow; but it seemed to me that the outspoken admiration in The Infant's eyes and the little stir in the little company came home to him very nearly indeed.

"Won't you take the sofa?" said The Infant. "I'll sit on Boileau's chair, and——" here he looked at me to spur me to my duties as a host; but I was watching the novelist's face. Cleever had not the least intention of going away, but settled himself on the sofa.

Following the first great law of the Army, which says "all property is common except money, and you've only got to ask the next man for that," The Infant offered tobacco and drink. It was the least he could do; but not the most lavish praise in the world held half as much appreciation and reverence as The Infant's simple "Say when, sir," above the long glass.

Cleever said "when," and more thereto, for he was a golden talker, and he sat in the midst of hero-worship devoid of all taint of self-interest. The boys asked him of the birth of his book, and whether it was hard to write, and how his notions came to him; and he answered with the same absolute simplicity as he was questioned. His big eyes twinkled, he dug his long thin hands into his

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gray beard and tugged it as he grew animated. He dropped little by little from the peculiar pinching of the broader vowels — the indefinable “euh,” that runs through the speech of the pun-dit caste — and the elaborate choice of words, to freely-mouthed “ows” and “ois,” and, for him at least, unfettered colloquialisms. He could not altogether understand the boys, who hung upon his words so reverently. The line of the chin-strap, that still showed white and untanned on cheek-bone and jaw, the steadfast young eyes puckered at the corners of the lids with much staring through red-hot sunshine, the slow, untroubled breathing, and the curious, crisp, curt speech seemed to puzzle him equally. He could create men and women, and send them to the uttermost ends of the earth, to help, delight, and comfort; he knew every mood of the fields, and could interpret them to the cities, and he knew the hearts of many in city and country, but he had hardly, in forty years, come into contact with the thing which is called a Subaltern of the Line. He told the boys this in his own way.

“Well, how should you?” said The Infant.  
“You — you’re quite different, y’ see, sir.”

The Infant expressed his ideas in his tone rather than his words, but Cleever understood the compliment.

“We’re only Subs,” said Nevin, “and we aren’t

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exactly the sort of men you'd meet much in your life, I s'pose."

"That's true," said Cleever. "I live chiefly among men who write, and paint, and sculp, and so forth. We have our own talk and our own interests, and the outer world doesn't trouble us much."

"That must be awfully jolly," said Boileau, at a venture. "We have our own shop, too, but 't isn't half as interesting as yours, of course. You know all the men who've ever done anything; and we only knock about from place to place, and we do nothing."

"The Army's a very lazy profession if you choose to make it so," said Nevin. "When there's nothing going on, there is nothing going on, and you lie up."

"Or try to get a billet somewhere, to be ready for the next show," said The Infant with a chuckle.

"To me," said Cleever softly, "the whole idea of warfare seems so foreign and unnatural, so essentially vulgar, if I may say so, that I can hardly appreciate your sensations. Of course, though, any change from idling in garrison towns must be a godsend to you."

Like many home-staying Englishmen, Cleever believed that the newspaper phrase he quoted covered the whole duty of the Army whose toils enabled him to enjoy his many-sided life in peace.



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The remark was not a happy one, for Boileau had just come off the Frontier, The Infant had been on the warpath for nearly eighteen months, and the little red man Nevin two months before had been sleeping under the stars at the peril of his life. But none of them tried to explain, till I ventured to point out that they had all seen service and were not used to idling. Cleever took in the idea slowly.

"Seen service?" said he. Then, as a child might ask, "Tell me. Tell me everything about everything."

"How do you mean?" said The Infant, delighted at being directly appealed to by the great man.

"Good Heavens! How am I to make you understand, if you can't see. In the first place, what is your age?"

"Twenty-three next July," said The Infant promptly.

Cleever questioned the others with his eyes.

"I'm twenty-four," said Nevin.

"And I'm twenty-two," said Boileau.

"And you've all seen service?"

"We've all knocked about a little bit, sir, but The Infant's the war-worn veteran. He's had two years' work in Upper Burma," said Nevin.

"When you say work, what do you mean, you extraordinary creatures?"

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"Explain it, Infant," said Nevin.

"Oh, keeping things in order generally, and running about after little *dakus* — that's dacoits — and so on. There's nothing to explain."

"Make that young Leviathan speak," said Cleever impatiently, above his glass.

"How can he speak?" said I. "He's done the work. The two don't go together. But, Infant, you're ordered to *bukb*."

"What about? I'll try."

"*Bukb* about a *daur*. You've been on heaps of 'em," said Nevin.

"What in the world does that mean? Has the Army a language of its own?"

The Infant turned very red. He was afraid he was being laughed at, and he detested talking before outsiders; but it was the author of "As it was in the Beginning" who waited.

"It's all so new to me," pleaded Cleever; "and — and you said you liked my book."

This was a direct appeal that The Infant could understand, and he began rather flurriedly, with much slang bred of nervousness —

"Pull me up, sir, if I say anything you don't follow. About six months before I took my leave out of Burma, I was on the Hlinedatalone, up near the Shan States, with sixty Tommies — private soldiers, that is — and another subaltern, a year senior to me. The Burmese business was a

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subaltern's war, and our forces were split up into little detachments, all running about the country and trying to keep the dacoits quiet. The dacoits were having a first-class time, y' know — filling women up with kerosene and setting 'em alight, and burning villages, and crucifying people."

The wonder in Eustace Cleever's eyes deepened. He could not quite realise that the cross still existed in any form.

"Have you ever seen a crucifixion?" said he.

"Of course not. 'Shouldn't have allowed it if I had; but I've seen the corpses. The dacoits had a trick of sending a crucified corpse down the river on a raft, just to show they were keeping their tail up and enjoying themselves. Well, that was the kind of people I had to deal with."

"Alone?" said Cleever. Solitude of the soul he could understand — none better — but he had never in the body moved ten miles from his fellows.

"I had my men, but the rest of it was pretty much alone. The nearest post that could give me orders was fifteen miles away, and we used to heliograph to them, and they used to give us orders same way — too many orders."

"Who was your C. O.?" said Boileau.

"Boulderby — Major. *Pukka* Boulderby; more Boulder than *pukka*. He went out up Bhamo

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way. Shot, or cut down, last year," said The Infant.

"What are these interludes in a strange tongue?" said Cleever to me.

"Professional information — like the Mississippi pilots' talk," said I. "He did not approve of his major, who died a violent death. Go on, Infant."

"Far too many orders. You couldn't take the Tommies out for a two days' *daur* — that's expedition — without being blown up for not asking leave. And the whole country was humming with dacoits. I used to send out spies, and act on their information. As soon as a man came in and told me of a gang in hiding, I'd take thirty men with some grub, and go out and look for them, while the other subaltern lay doggo in camp."

"Lay! Pardon me, but *how* did he lie?" said Cleever.

"Lay doggo — lay quiet, with the other thirty men. When I came back, he'd take out his half of the men, and have a good time of his own."

"Who was he?" said Boileau.

"Carter-Deecey, of the Aurungabadis. Good chap, but too *zubberdusty*, and went *bokbar* four days out of seven. He's gone out too. Don't interrupt a man."

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Cleever looked helplessly at me.

"The other subaltern," I translated swiftly, "came from a native regiment, and was overbearing in his demeanour. He suffered much from the fever of the country, and is now dead. Go on, Infant."

"After a bit, we got into trouble for using the men on frivolous occasions, and so I used to put my signaller under arrest to prevent him reading the helio-orders. Then I'd go out and leave a message to be sent an hour after I got clear of the camp, something like this: 'Received important information; start in an hour, unless countermanded.' If I was ordered back, it didn't much matter. I swore the C. O.'s watch was wrong, or something, when I came back. The Tommies enjoyed the fun, and — Oh, yes, there was one Tommy who was the bard of the detachment. He used to make up verses on everything that happened."

"What sort of verses?" said Cleever.

"Lovely verses; and the Tommies used to sing 'em. There was one song with a chorus, and it said something like this." The Infant dropped into the true barrack-room twang:

"Theebaw, the Burma king, did a very foolish thing,  
When 'e mustered 'ostile forces in ar-rai,  
'E little thought that *we*, from far across the sea,  
Would send our armies up to Mandalai!"

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“O gorgeous!” said Cleever. “And how magnificently direct! The notion of a regimental bard is new to me, but of course it must be so.”

“He was awfully popular with the men,” said The Infant. “He had them all down in rhyme as soon as ever they had done anything. He was a great bard. He was always ready with an elegy when we picked up a Boh—that’s a leader of dacoits.”

“How did you pick him up?” said Cleever.

“Oh! shot him if he wouldn’t surrender.”

“You! Have you shot a man?”

There was a subdued chuckle from all three boys, and it dawned on the questioner that one experience in life which was denied to himself, and he weighed the souls of men in a balance, had been shared by three very young gentlemen of engaging appearance. He turned round on Nevin, who had climbed to the top of the bookcase and was sitting cross-legged as before.

“And have *you*, too?”

“Think so,” said Nevin, sweetly. “In the Black Mountain. He was rolling cliffs on to my half-company, and spoiling our formation. I took a rifle from a man, and brought him down at the second shot.”

“Good Heavens! And how did you feel afterwards?”

“Thirsty. I wanted a smoke, too.”

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Cleever looked at Boileau — the youngest. Surely his hands were guiltless of blood.

Boileau shook his head and laughed. "Go on, Infant," said he.

"And you too?" said Cleever.

"Fancy so. It was a case of cut, cut or be cut, with me; so I cut — one. I couldn't do any more, sir."

Cleever looked as though he would like to ask many questions, but The Infant swept on in the full tide of his tale.

"Well, we were called insubordinate young whelps at last, and strictly forbidden to take the Tommies out any more without orders. I wasn't sorry, because Tommy is such an exacting sort of creature. He wants to live as though he were in barracks all the time. I was grubbing on fowls and boiled corn, but the Tommies wanted their pound of fresh meat, and their half ounce of this, and their two ounces of t'other thing, and they used to come to me and badger me for plug tobacco when we were four days in jungle. I said: 'I can get you Burma tobacco, but I don't keep a canteen up my sleeve.' They couldn't see it. They wanted all the luxuries of the season, confound 'em!"

"You were alone when you were dealing with these men?" said Cleever, watching The Infant's face under the palm of his hand. He was re-



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ceiving new ideas, and they seemed to trouble him.

“Of course, unless you count the mosquitoes. They were nearly as big as the men. After I had to lie doggo I began to look for something to do, and I was great pals with a man called Hicksey in the Police, the best man that ever stepped on earth; a first-class man.”

Cleever nodded applause. He knew how to appreciate enthusiasm.

“Hicksey and I were as thick as thieves. He had some Burma mounted police — rummy chaps, armed with sword and Snider carbine. They rode punchy Burma ponies, with string stirrups, red cloth saddles, and red bell-rope headstalls. Hicksey used to lend me six or eight of them when I asked him — nippy little devils, keen as mustard. But they told their wives too much, and all my plans got known, till I learned to give false marching orders overnight, and take the men to quite a different village in the morning. Then we used to catch the simple *daku* before breakfast, and made him very sick. It's a ghastly country on the Hlinedatalone; all bamboo jungle, with paths about four feet wide winding through it. The *daku* knew all the paths, and potted at us as we came round a corner; but the mounted police knew the paths as well as the *daku*, and we used to go stalking 'em in and out. Once we flushed

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'em, the men on the ponies had the advantage of the men on foot. We held all the country absolutely quiet for ten miles round, in about a month. Then we took Boh Na-ghee, Hicksey and I and the civil officer. That was a lark!"

"I think I am beginning to understand a little," said Cleever. "It was a pleasure to you to administer and fight?"

"Rather! There's nothing nicer than a satisfactory little expedition, when you find your plans fit together, and your information's *teek* — correct, you know, and the whole *sub-chiz* — I mean, when everything works out like formulæ on a black-board. Hicksey had all the information about the Boh. He had been burning villages and murdering people right and left, and cutting up Government convoys, and all that. He was lying doggo in a village about fifteen miles off, waiting to get a fresh gang together. So we arranged to take thirty mounted police, and turn him out before he could plunder into our newly-settled villages. At the last minute, the civil officer in our part of the world thought he'd assist at the performance."

"Who was he?" said Nevin.

"His name was Dennis," said The Infant slowly. "And we'll let it stay so. He's a better man now than he was then."

"But how old was the civil power?" said Cleever. "The situation is developing itself."

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"He was about six-and-twenty, and he was awfully clever. He knew a lot of things, but I don't think he was quite steady enough for dacoit-hunting. We started overnight for Boh Na-ghee's village, and we got there just before morning, without raising an alarm. Dennis had turned out armed to his teeth — two revolvers, a carbine, and all sorts of things. I was talking to Hicksey about posting the men, and Dennis edged his pony in between us, and said, 'What shall I do? What shall I do? Tell me what to do, you fellows.' We didn't take much notice; but his pony tried to bite me in the leg, and I said, 'Pull out a bit, old man, till we've settled the attack.' He kept edging in, and fiddling with his reins and his revolvers, and saying, 'Dear me! Dear me! Oh, dear me! What do you think I'd better do?' The man was in a deadly funk, and his teeth were chattering."

"I sympathise with the civil power," said Cleever. "Continue, young Clive."

"The fun of it was, that he was supposed to be our superior officer. Hicksey took a good look at him, and told him to attach himself to my party. Beastly mean of Hicksey, that. The chap kept on edging in and bothering, instead of asking for some men and taking up his own position, till I got angry, and the carbines began popping on the other side of the village. Then I said,

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‘For God’s sake be quiet, and sit down where you are! If you see anybody come out of the village, shoot at him.’ I knew he couldn’t hit a hayrick at a yard. Then I took my men over the garden wall—over the palisades, y’ know—somehow or other, and the fun began. Hicksey had found the Boh in bed under a mosquito-curtain, and he had taken a flying jump on to him.”

“A flying jump!” said Cleever. “Is that also war?”

“Yes,” said The Infant, now thoroughly warmed. “Don’t you know how you take a flying jump on to a fellow’s head at school, when he snores in the dormitory? The Boh was sleeping in a bedful of swords and pistols, and Hicksey came down like Zazel through the netting, and the net got mixed up with the pistols and the Boh and Hicksey, and they all rolled on the floor together. I laughed till I couldn’t stand, and Hicksey was cursing me for not helping him; so I left him to fight it out and went into the village. Our men were slashing about and firing, and so were the dacoits, and in the thick of the mess some ass set fire to a house, and we all had to clear out. I froze on to the nearest *daku* and ran to the palisade, shoving him in front of me. He wriggled loose and bounded over the other side. I came after him; but when I had one leg one side and one leg the other of the palisade, I saw that the *daku* had fallen

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flat on Dennis's head. That man had never moved from where I left him. They rolled on the ground together, and Dennis's carbine went off and nearly shot me. The *daku* picked himself up and ran, and Dennis buzzed his carbine after him, and it caught him on the back of his head and knocked him silly. You never saw anything so funny in your life. I doubled up on the top of the palisade and hung there, yelling with laughter. But Dennis began to weep like anything. 'Oh, I've killed a man,' he said. 'I've killed a man, and I shall never know another peaceful hour in my life. Is he dead? Oh, *is* he dead? Good Lord, I've killed a man!' I came down and said, 'Don't be a fool;' but he kept on shouting, 'Is he dead?' till I could have kicked him. The *daku* was only knocked out of time with the carbine. He came to after a bit, and I said, 'Are you hurt much?' He groaned and said, 'No.' His chest was all cut with scrambling over the palisade. 'The white man's gun didn't do that,' he said; 'I did that, and I knocked the white man over.' Just like a Burman, wasn't it? But Dennis wouldn't be happy at any price. He said: 'Tie up his wounds. He'll bleed to death. Oh, he'll bleed to death!' 'Tie 'em up yourself,' I said, 'if you're so anxious.' 'I can't touch him,' said Dennis, 'but here's my shirt.' He took off his shirt, and fixed the braces again over his bare

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shoulders. I ripped the shirt up, and bandaged the dacoit quite professionally. He was grinning at Dennis all the time; and Dennis's haversack was lying on the ground, bursting full of sandwiches. Greedy hog! I took some, and offered some to Dennis. 'How can I eat?' he said. 'How can you ask me to eat? His very blood is on your hands now, and you're eating *my* sandwiches!' 'All right,' I said; 'I'll give 'em to the *daku*.' So I did, and the little chap was quite pleased, and wolfed 'em down like one o'clock."

Cleever brought his hand down on the table with a thump that made the empty glasses dance. "That's Art!" he said. "Flat, flagrant mechanism! Don't tell me that happened on the spot!"

The pupils of The Infant's eyes contracted to two pin-points. "I beg your pardon," he said slowly and stiffly, "but I am telling this thing as it happened."

Cleever looked at him a moment. "My fault entirely," said he; "I should have known. Please go on."

"Hicksey came out of what was left of the village with his prisoners and captives, all neatly tied up. Boh Na-ghee was first, and one of the villagers, as soon as he found the old ruffian helpless, began kicking him quietly. The Boh stood it as long as he could, and then groaned, and we saw what was going on. Hicksey tied the villager up and

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gave him a half a dozen, good, with a bamboo, to remind him to leave a prisoner alone. You should have seen the old Boh grin. Oh! but Hicksey was in a furious rage with everybody. He'd got a wipe over the elbow that had tickled up his funny-bone, and he was rabid with me for not having helped him with the Boh and the mosquito-net. I had to explain that I couldn't do anything. If you'd seen 'em both tangled up together on the floor in one kicking cocoon, you'd have laughed for a week. Hicksey swore that the only decent man of his acquaintance was the Boh, and all the way to camp Hicksey was talking to the Boh, and the Boh was complaining about the soreness of his bones. When we got back, and had had a bath, the Boh wanted to know when he was going to be hanged. Hicksey said he couldn't oblige him on the spot, but had to send him to Rangoon. The Boh went down on his knees, and reeled off a catalogue of his crimes—he ought to have been hanged seventeen times over, by his own confession—and implored Hicksey to settle the business out of hand. 'If I'm sent to Rangoon,' said he, 'they'll keep me in jail all my life, and that is a death every time the sun gets up or the wind blows.' But we had to send him to Rangoon, and, of course, he was let off down there, and given penal servitude for life. When I came to Rangoon I went over the jail—I had helped to fill it,



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y' know — and the old Boh was there, and he spotted me at once. He begged for some opium first, and I tried to get him some, but that was against the rules. Then he asked me to have his sentence changed to death, because he was afraid of being sent to the Andamans. I couldn't do that either, but I tried to cheer him, and told him how things were going up-country, and the last thing he said was — 'Give my compliments to the fat white man who jumped on me. If I'd been awake I'd have killed him.' I wrote that to Hicksey next mail, and — and that's all. I'm 'fraid I've been gassing awf'ly, sir."

Cleever said nothing for a long time. The Infant looked uncomfortable. He feared that, misled by enthusiasm, he had filled up the novelist's time with unprofitable recital of trivial anecdotes.

Then said Cleever, "I can't understand. Why should you have seen and done all these things before you have cut your wisdom-teeth?"

"Don't know," said The Infant apologetically. "I haven't seen much — only Burmese jungle."

"And dead men, and war, and power, and responsibility," said Cleever, under his breath. "You won't have any sensations left at thirty, if you go on as you have done. But I want to hear more tales — more tales!" He seemed to forget that even subalterns might have engagements of their own.

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"We're thinking of dining out somewhere — the lot of us — and going on to the Empire afterwards," said Nevin, with hesitation. He did not like to ask Cleever to come too. The invitation might be regarded as perilously near to "cheek." And Cleever, anxious not to wag a gray beard unbidden among boys at large, said nothing on his side.

Boileau solved the little difficulty by blurting out: "Won't you come too, sir?"

Cleever almost shouted "Yes," and while he was being helped into his coat continued to murmur "Good Heavens!" at intervals in a way that the boys could not understand.

"I don't think I've been to the Empire in my life," said he; "but — what *is* my life after all? Let us go."

They went out with Eustace Cleever, and I sulked at home because they had come to see me, but had gone over to the better man; which was humiliating. They packed him into a cab with utmost reverence, for was he not the author of "As it was in the Beginning," and a person in whose company it was an honour to go abroad? From all I gathered later, he had taken less interest in the performance before him than in their conversations, and they protested with emphasis that he was "as good a man as they make; knew what a man was driving at almost before he said

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it; and yet he's so damned simple about things any man knows." That was one of many comments.

At midnight they returned, announcing that they were "highly respectable gondoliers," and that oysters and stout were what they chiefly needed. The eminent novelist was still with them, and I think he was calling them by their shorter names. I am certain that he said he had been moving in worlds not realised, and that they had shown him the Empire in a new light.

Still sore at recent neglect, I answered shortly, "Thank Heaven we have within the land ten thousand as good as they," and when he departed, asked him what he thought of things generally

He replied with another quotation, to the effect that though singing was a remarkably fine performance, I was to be quite sure that few lips would be moved to song if they could find a sufficiency of kissing.

Whereby I understood that Eustace Cleever, decorator and colourman in words, was blaspheming his own Art, and would be sorry for this in the morning.











